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AUTHOR Metz, Mary Haywood
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ABSTRACT

This is a report on a study of two junior high schools in a small Midwestern city called "Avon". This industrial community serves an agricultural region. This study was undertaken as a complement to a study of two other junior high schools in a much less ordinary community and school system ("Canton") which had been previously studied. This report concentrates upon a comprehensive analytic description of the character of the classrooms and schools studied in Avon and upon those theoretical issues or empirical hypotheses where the findings from Avon extend or qualify those from Canton. Avon operates three junior high schools drawing from the city and two drawing mainly from surrounding unincorporated areas. Two city schools were chosen for this study, Dale and Fillmore. They have the highest proportion of recent Appalachian migrants in their student bodies and were chosen for this reason. The approach in studying the schools was ethnographic. The main focus was to observe the ways in which maintenance of control interacts with the school's other functions both in the classroom and in the school at large. In studying these differences in children's behavior within and between schools, differences between teachers and differences in the way a single teacher treated different students, differences in the policies and the practices of the principals, and differences in the character of the schools as whole organizations were studied. It was observed that the character of a school depends in large part on the nature of its environment; as that term is technically used in the study of organizations. Perhaps the most important single influence on a school was the students. Because the teachers perform the central work of the organization and because they form the vast majority of persons given a formal right to define the situation, they were found to be the next most important group in determining the character of the school. This detailed description of Dale and Fillmore provided a subjective sense of the complex ways in which students' behavior, teachers' skills and characters, and the principal's policies blend into a total school atmosphere which in turn shapes students', teachers', and administrators' behavior. (Author/AM)

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# FINAL REPORT

## The Exercise of Control in Two Midwestern Junior High Schools

National Institute of Education Project No. 4-0661

Mary Haywood Metz

Earlham College
Richmond, Indiana

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# The Exercise of Control in Two Midwestern Junior High Schools

Mary Haywood Metz
Earlham College

The following pages are primarily a report on a study of two junior high schools in the small city of "Avon", an industrial community serving an agricultural region on the southern edge of middle America. The study of Avon was undertaken as a complement to a study of two other junior high schools in a much less ordinary community and school system. However, my grant from NIE covered only revision of the study of "Canton" which is thoroughly described in a manuscript for a book. This report will therefore concentrate upon an analytic description of the character of the classrooms and schools studied in Avon and upon those theoretical issues or empirical hypotheses where the findings from Avon extend or qualify those from Canton.

A sociological description of the character of Avon's schools is important in itself, aside from its direct contribution to theory. Schools have been little studied by sociologists, and our knowledge of the character of their detailed daily life is limited indeed. I believe this to be so in part because their character as organizations makes them strongly susceptible to the influence of idiosyncratic conditions in their environment. These conditions affect the overall character and the daily life of schools not only singly but through complex interaction. It is therefore difficult to move from the events of school life in a variety of settings to the empirical generalizations and theoretical propositions which are social scientists' concern.

In such a situation we need to exercise patience and to use the resources to conduct a great many detailed field studies of many different kinds of schools. Through a composite of these we may be able to identify the analytically important dimensions on which schools vary and the elements of similarity which run through all schools, or all schools of various large categories. Following this belief, I devote the bulk of this report to an account of the character of the Avon schools.

## THE AVON COMMUNITY

The communities in which schools are located affect their internal operation in many ways. They determine the character of the students, the expectations and behavior of parents, the kind of teacher and administrator attracted to live and work in the area, and the political pressures to which elected school boards must be responsive.

Avon is a small city of just under 50,000 supported primarily by heavy industry. However, it is located in an agricultural region and provides a service center for surrounding towns and unincorporated areas. It does have a private college of modest national reputation, but the college is small and its impact on civic affairs is slight.

A trip of forty miles is required to reach a town of equal size. Such a trip across the state line brings one to a metropolis of nationally known name which supports an airport served by several major airlines and one or two large department stores which provide Avonites their main reason for travel there. A trip of seventy miles brings one to a much larger metropolis supporting museums, performing arts groups, television stations for every network, and a nationally known newspaper.

Avon's state is indisputably part of "America's heartland", both geographically and socially. At the same time, Avon and the areas to the south of it display a distinct southern influence noticeable in the twang of natives' speech, especially the less educated groups', in the standard "come back, now" offered by store clerks, and in the racial attitudes of many of its citizens.

Avon is politically conservative. Goldwater took the county in 1964 and Democrats rarely capture offices higher than those at the city level. Welfare programs are held at a bare minimum and even these are treated with suspicion. The single local newspaper started to capitalize United Nations only in the late sixties. It still refuses to print notice of either the existence or the hours of free obstetrical and pediatric clinics available twice a week to persons who can prove inability to pay.

The city is 6% black. The black population is a relatively established and educated one led by descendants of persons who were brought there to safety by Quakers before the Civil War. There are no significant numbers of other racial minorities.

The vast majority of the city consists of white persons of working class status. There are no strong ethnic enclaves except those of recent migrants from Appalachia who initially settle in a few discernible areas of the city. But many move on to larger cities or else fan out into Avon -- unhindered by a distinctive skin color, accent, or set of last names.

The civic leaders of Avon are drawn from the local professionals and leading merchants and from a mobile pool of executives of nationally owned industry. On the whole, the college carries on an existence separate from the town. Both gown and town find cordial relations easier at some social distance. The town's people feel by turns pride in the college's wide reputation and suspicion of its liberal ideas and practices.

In contrast, Canton is a community of well over 100,000 embedded in a far larger urban area. Other cities are contiguous with it on two sides. The urban area is a major one considered to

be sophisticated, and the city itself includes a nationally recognized university. The political complection of the city is liberal. The population at the time of the study was 26% black, and the school population was 41% black. Though the black population contained a core of established and well educated persons and an active and informed leadership, it also included a sizable component of working and lower class persons. The white working class was unusually small. The percentage of the population with a college education and professional and managerial occupations was far above average. School affairs were dominated by the leadership of the black community and the leadership of the professional white community with the leadership of the middle class white local business community registering strong dissenting opinions.

In 1964 the dominant groups controlling the school board mandated the integration of all the junior high schools so that they reflected the population of the city. The dissidents were unsuccessful in a bitterly fought recall of the school board. In 1969 the elementary schools were similarly desegregated.

## AVON'S SCHOOLS AND THE METHODS OF STUDY

Avon operates three junior high schools drawing from the city and two drawing mainly from surrounding unincorporated areas. Two city schools were chosen for this study, Dale and Fillmore. They have the highest proportion of recent Appalachian migrants in their student bodies and were chosen for this reason. It was possible to separate the effects of poverty and ethnicity in students' interaction with the schools. Despite the common presence of students from Appalachia, the schools had dissimilar total student bodies which contributed significantly to different school atmospheres.

Dale, which enrolled 832 students in the fall of 1974, draws all the students of Pleasant Glade, the elite section of the city. Indeed it takes all the children of the South Side which is considered the affluent and fashionable section. It also enrolls a small black clientele--less than 10% of the student body--from the East Side, the poorest black section, a sizable contingent of Appalachian migrants, and some working class whites.

Fillmore, approximately half as large, with 396 students in the fall of 1974, draws its students from the immediately surrounding West Side, an historically modest neighborhood which is deteriorating. Its students are about 23% black. The blacks in this area are generally more successful than those on the East Side. They have occupied this area for more than a generation, living side by side with whites of lower educational and occupational accomplishment.

Marbury, the third city junior high school, draws from the North Side which includes the college. It thus contains most of the children whose parents are associated with the college. It also draws the upper middle class black children whose families

have fanned out into this area. It is populated primarily with stable lower middle class and working class white families.

Dale draws from the elementary schools with the socially worst and best reputations in the city, along with several others. Fillmore has undoubtedly the worst reputation among the junior high schools.

My approach in studying these schools was ethnographic. I was interested in the way that the maintenance of control interacts with the school's other functions both in the classroom and in the school at large. In studying these questions I wanted to observe differences in children's behavior within and between schools, differences between teachers and differences in the way a single teacher treated different students, differences in policies and practices of the principals, and differences in the character of the schools as whole organizations. Because I was most interested in the effect of social class and achievement level among students, I did not try to study the very real effects of age at the junior high level. I therefore concentrated my observations on the eighth grade and chose teachers to observe and to interview who worked predominantly with eighth graders.

At each school, after receiving permission from the principal (following an introduction from the Director of Secondary Education), I began the study by following two eighth grade students through a class day. At each school one was a boy, one a girl, and one in high achieving classes, the other in low achieving ones. At Fillmore I was introduced to the faculty and explained my project at a faculty meeting; at Dale I was introduced by a note in the faculty bulletin. At both schools I introduced myself to the teachers of the children I followed and requested permission to observe them for a period. I then asked four teachers of academic subjects in the eighth grade to observe them for all or most of their day. (With one teacher who was very uneasy I was able to observe only two classes. With all the others I observed at least four, covering the extremes of achievement to which they were assigned.) At both schools the sample of teachers included two men and two women. At Fillmore, where there were only five classes in each subject for the eighth grade the teachers taught math, science, English, and social studies. At Dale, where there were ten groups, they taught science and English.

After observing each of these teachers I interviewed them for approximately forty minutes. I also interviewed counselors, assistant principals, and principals at both schools. With two exceptions interviews were tape recorded. I attended a faculty meeting at each school, ate lunch with the faculty, and occasionally spent time in the lounge while a student I was following had study hall or a teacher had preparation period. I spent a good deal of time in the corridors as I followed both students and teachers and came and went from interview appointments. I collected and read faculty and student handbooks and school bulletins for the entire year. The study was conducted in the spring of 1975.

The design of the study of Avon followed the general pattern of that in Canton except that each school was studied more briefly and I did not interview students as I did in Canton where I spent a full year in the two schools together.

My purpose in studying the Avon schools was to understand the operation of schools in general. I have attempted to see and to describe the particular actions and attitudes of individuals and collectivities as examples of possible categories and as reactions to common constellations of interactions and events. Because this was my purpose I have not attempted an exhaustive or a practically evaluative study of the two schools. Had I been studying them for the practical benefit or use of responsible persons in the school system I would have used different methods and written about them with different questions and perspective. I have therefore changed the name of the community, the schools, and all individuals. Where necessary to protect individuals' privacy I have changed identifying details.

## THE THEORETICAL CONTEXT

My analysis of the schools of Canton led me to believe that schools are subjected to contradictory pressures inherent in their character as organizations. The single goal of "education" is defined in many ways which compete in both precept and practice. Persons of equal dedication and good faith may find themselves in almost total opposition concerning the priority of activities and outcomes appropriate for any given grade or course. And even where there is agreement over the ends to be sought, there is little clarity over the means for reaching them. The technology of education is rudimentary and mostly based on tradition. Attempts at innovative methods of various kinds are made, but none has been demonstrated reliably effective. Nor is there agreement over valid methods of testing the effects of any strategy used.

The study of organizations more generally indicates that organizations with competing goals and nonroutine technologies of uncertain effectiveness prosper best when they are structured in a decentralized way. The persons who work most closely with the material the organization exists to transform, who do its actual work and bring about the realization of its goals, have the most expertise in recognizing and dealing with the needs of the process. These organizations generally give these persons autonomy to use their best judgment, to adjust their methods to each separate situation. Full professionals in organizations generally perform work of this kind and are given autonomy, but workers in various craft industries have analogous freedom and responsibility. Schools approximate this model in the independence and privacy of the separate class under a single teacher's care for a whole school year. The class operates in some privacy, and the teacher has some claim to shelter his activities from the inquiring eyes of anyone but his students.

However, this autonomy for the teacher and the independence of his classes is limited in degrees varying from slight to severe. Schools also operate under a set of pressures which demand a precisely opposed structure. They are organizations chronically subjected to attack, and their character is such as to make them vulnerable to that attack. First, the majority of persons on the physical premises are not freely contracting members of the organization. Rather they are involuntary recruits required by law to come to a given school for a given period of time whether or not they wish to be present or perceive any benefit to themselves from being present. The ordinary school has no more choice than the students. It must work with all the children of its area. Further, students are in a period of life when they are full of physical and social energy, which they are required to restrain, and they are only half-socialized to the ways of the society. Even with the ambitious children of the upper strata of society, control in a school is problematic. With the children of lower strata who may see no benefit to themselves from the school's ministrations, it can totally preoccupy the staff.

Not only must the school deal with attacks from students, but--under the system of lay control and local school districts--it must be constantly responsive to the wishes of parents and influential members of the community, even though their demands may be in direct opposition to one another.

The study of organizations generally indicates that those subjected to frequent attack tend to operate most easily with rigid centralized control and strictly enforced hierarchy. This structure is of course directly opposed to that required by organizations with non-routine technologies. The structure of most schools reflects the pressures for centralization in a hierarchical structure at the district level extending down to the school principals who are held accountable for the behavior of their teachers--despite the closed classroom door.

The formal structure of the school with its independent classrooms and formal bureaucractic hierarchy of positions thus reflects the ambivalence of the school in the face of contradictory pressures. Either the independence of the classroom or the hierarchy of the district structure may be ignored in practice while maintained in outward form. And in fact it seems that school districts vary considerably in the stress they put upon the importance of one or the other.

Where students, community, or school staff are aware of the varying needs of students and the difficulty of meeting them all with a single approach, the autonomy of each classroom is likely to be stressed. Further, where teachers are skilled, dedicated, and reflective they are likely to demand such autonomy as a condition of their work and to use it responsibly. Where they lack these qualities, they are less likely to demand such freedom, or winning it, to use it primarily for the benefit of the students. On the other hand, where students are particularly skeptical or hostile toward the school's efforts and order becomes a pressing problem, the school is more likely to expect teachers to standardize their activities. The same pressures are likely to exist where

parents or community are quick to take alarm at practices which violate their predilections. Thus the balance of hierarchy and classroom autonomy in any school is likely to be determined by the character of the school's environment--by the characteristics of students, teachers, parents and the wider community. But there is no guarantee that these elements of the environment will all press toward one pattern.

In Canton they did not. Highly trained and sophisticated teachers wanted and expected classroom autonomy. Academically demanding black and white parents tended to support them in this expectation. But they closely scrutinized school activities and quickly criticized ones they found inappropriate. Alienated lower class black students presented serious problems of order in both classroom and corridor, and sophisticated and rebellious children of professionals pressed for intellectually imaginative classes, while they defied school procedure in the school at large. The contradictions of the school's organizational character were thus visible to an observer and painful to the participants.

## ORGANIZATIONAL PRESSURES IN THE AVON SCHOOLS

In Avon, on the other hand, organizational contradictions were much less intensely felt. No segment of the community was intensely involved in the character of the schools. In 1975 the black community, through the usual black organizations, was only moderately active in putting pressure upon them, and this pressure usually centered on such issues as controversial discipline of a student. There was only a beginning to organized concern over such matters as the placement of secondary students in vocational or college preparatory curricula. Working class whites were generally inactive, though supportive of the district's long time policy of operating strictly in the black. Support for sports was high and a single high school of 3000 students enabled the city teams to rank high in the state each season. Many children of college professors were sent to boarding school at the secondary level, and the other upper middle class members of the community did not press the schools on matters of daily policy.

On the other hand, the majority of the community could easily be aroused to shocked disapproval by visible disorder in the schools. In 1971 black high school students had demonstrated in support of a fellow student handled roughly and called a derogatory name by a teacher. The community grew fearful and the school was closed for some days. An interracial conflict among students at Fillmore, one of the schools studied in 1975, during the spring of 1974 had made newspaper headlines and incited rumors in the town of riot at the school during the following year upon the mere sound of a fire siren in that part of the city.

The city contained enough children both black and white among those who lived in the deprivations of poverty who considered the school to be an agency neither friendly nor useful to them so

that order was constantly problematic.

The community and the students thus had a character which encouraged the schools to operate in a fashion which stressed the prevention of disorder. The conservative political philosophy of the area attributed academic as well as economic failure to faults in the performer rather than his social context. There was thus no community pressure to design curricula intended to excite the interests or efforts of the apathetic or antagonistic children of the lower classes.

Teachers and administrators in the two junior high schools I studied had almost all been raised in Avon or its immediate rural environs. They had been educated at teachers' colleges in the state. Older teachers and administrators had experience in surrounding rural districts or purely in Avon, with a few exceptions. The majority of the school staff thus had an upbringing and training which was continuous with the assumptions of the community. The teachers with some experience outside the immediate area were also those most likely to differ from the norm in their perspectives or practices.

Among the shared assumptions in the system was an expectation that the schools would be run in a predominantly hierarchical fashion. The central administration and the principals were expected to make all important policy decisions, teachers might--and frequently did--object to the content of given actions or decisions, but they never asked for a larger part in the process of decision making. Decisions on curriculum included the deliberations of citywide committees of teachers which would gather opinions from all classroom teachers. But these decisions were made within a narrow scope. They concerned which textbook would be adopted for a five year term, not whether there should be a textbook, or whether teachers might have a budget for supplementary materials.

Teachers took it for granted that they would teach their classes around the texts chosen for the district with little added or subtracted from a straight pursuit of the material they contained from beginning to end. They discussed and criticized the merits of these materials from time to time--especially in two subjects where the students were having difficulty with them--but they did not question the general design of following a text as the fundamental pedagogical activity.

They did not reflect deeply upon their goals but rather accepted as self-evident the importance of getting students to learn the material in the standard curriculum and the necessity of maintaining classroom order or "discipline" as a means to that end. Though teachers did vary in the way that they presented the curricular material and particularly in the style of their pedagogical and disciplinary relationship with the children, these differences were more the result of personality than of strategy or ideology. They were therefore not the subject of discussion or a basis of conflict among faculty or between the faculty and

the administration.

There was a small group of faculty at Dale with a self-consciously different set of goals and means. They did want and need autonomy to follow their purposes. And they felt in some conflict with the new principal as a result. However, none of this small group taught eighth grade and so none were in my interview sample. I therefore can say little more about them. They constituted, in any case, five or fewer teachers from a faculty of forty.

The administrations at both schools studied shared the assumptions of the teachers (as apparently did the central administration--though this level of the district was not directly studied). In their work with teachers they were primarily concerned with maintaining minimal competence in a traditional transfer of knowledge and in maintaining orderly, civil, and quiet classroom relationships.

Finally, both schools contained significant numbers of children who found the school an alien context in which they performed poorly. Both schools, though Fillmore to a much higher degree, were constantly faced with the possibility of their students' forceful angry expressions at either adults or peers. Order was thus a pressing problem and concern.

Thus, there was a concatenation of pressures from community, teachers, administrators, and students in Avon which led them to give the maintenance of order high priority. At the same time, there were few pressures for autonomy for teachers or for a varied or flexible curriculum which would try to fit teaching and learning to diverse individuals or groups. The Avon schools then had much reason to be run in a centralized, hierarchical, and standardized fashion.

There was, however, one significant pressure running counter to these and this was the pressure of lower class parents--mostly but not entirely black--and of black community organizations against the use of strong disciplinary sanctions on rebellious students. Behind this was a knowledge of changing standards of discipline in the country at large and of court decisions granting students' rights and freedoms in the face of regimentation or coercive sanctions. This pressure pushed the schools to find methods of obtaining student cooperation other than strict control, regimentation, and punishment for deviance. Its effect will be explored at length in discussing the character of the schools as wholes.

In the following pages I will consider first the kinds of relationships which developed between Avon's teachers and students in their classrooms. How was the situation defined by teachers and by students? What variations existed in the character of classroom interaction? What were the causes and consequences of these variations? In later pages I will ask similar questions about the relationships of administrators and teachers with one

another and, as a group of adults, with the student body of a whole school. Throughout I will emphasize the ways in which the adults' need to exercise control and maintain order interacts with their other goals and duties.

## TEACHERS' DEFINITIONS OF THE SCHOOL

Avon's teachers virtually without exception conceive of the teaching process as one of setting up a routine and giving out information. Asked what they do the first day or the first week to "get things started and set the tone" all mentioned the mechanics of getting lists of names and addresses, passing out texts, setting up seating charts, and laying out rules for classroom decorum. Most mentioned nothing else. One or two went beyond these basics with some attempt to lure the students into the enterprise. Thus one answers:

> They know who I am before they come in. I've been here long enough so that they know about me. At the beginning I introduce the subject and the rules of the room. Anyone may speak in class and the rest of us will listen. There is no such thing as a stupid person and therefore there are no stupid answers. We may find answers funny but not because they are stupid. We laugh with each other. Everyone has areas where they excel and we look for those.

Another, a science teacher, tries to generate interest:

> Well, normally I'd say it takes three or four days to outline exactly what you're going to do in the course. And normally I try to go through and take out 4 or 5 chapters that are really interesting and have it set up as a demonstration before the class. I'll do those before the class and explain them somewhat and that might take a day or two doing that, explaining it. I try to develop an interest to get started in the course. And then normally after you do that it takes a day or two to explain the procedures for coming in the room and maybe the penalties for not following those instructions. I never have very many rules and regulations because you could spend all your time trying to uphold those but have seven or eight good rules they must follow and maybe a day or so on the testing procedure and makeup tests and grades and things like that.

These two teachers, one at each school, were probably those in the interview sample most sensitive to students' needs and thoughts. The following discussion of her approach to her high ability English classes by a first year teacher is--if exaggerated--more typical of the style of the teachers overall.

> In my other classes, they're supposed to be very, very high level students. Well, this is all set up. They have books, special textbooks, and the other teacher, Mrs. Bruner, and I - we exchange books. The first nine weeks, I use literature books, and she uses the grammar books, and so forth. And so, there's not that much of a problem as to what material we're going to be using. But, I would consider this to be my most easy part of the day, and like, Mrs. Bruner, she's had a lot of experience. I guess she's been teaching for about three or four years. . . . And, so (she) gives help - old tests - and I really don't have that much to do. And most of the kids do understand.

The same teacher also had two reading classes, remedial classes for low achievers. Here she describes the intervention of a specialist for students in academic difficulty--the only such reference encountered during the study. But this teacher finds the approach suggested by the specialist distasteful because it requires her to tailor her teaching to the needs and even to the desires of the students.

> She gives us materials and different operations in handling these different programs. She told me I would have to play it by ear, according to the different needs of the students. I would more or less have to sense their needs. And how they are responding. I would have to try something, and if they don't respond to what I'm doing, I would have to set up a different program. So it's mostly been a changing process all during the year. Almost like I'm more or less like their servant, or something, you know. I have to suit them. They'd have to direct, I guess, their wants to me and then I would have to find some type of program, eventually, to suit them.

When other teachers were asked what adjustments they had to make to different classes they sometimes mentioned the age of the students, sometimes the idiosyncracies of specific classes. (Teachers in Canton almost always mentioned differences in ability groups.) Asked about differences with the ability level of the class, Avon teachers dealt solely with the capacity of the students to cope with the standard curriculum. No teacher speculated about the perspective of the students, what the meaning of the curriculum or of classroom effort might be to them. They saw students as simply succeeding or failing at the required task.

A veteran English teacher who gave more detail than most about the adjustments necessary with these classes still described them with a discernible edge of asperity, visible also in her classroom actions:

I: What about the kind of lesson plan that you design for. . . a top level versus a bottom level? Would there be a difference in the way you structure the hour?

R: Yes. Because with a low level I want them to give me feedback and I want to give them feedback much more quickly, much more frequently. For instance with this last period class I have which has a very short attention span and has an attrocious self-image. With them they may have three or four little written exercises because they have to have something concrete. They cannot discuss. They haven't learned self-discipline to that point. And I frequently have as many as three little written exercises. I'll read one and give them back to them right away so that they see the A. I always try to make something high. They get very noisy about, "he's cheating," "he's doing this." I have to let this go. I have to allow certain - because with the first one they can be quiet and do it themselves and I can check it. The second one they need some help. If there's a third one I'll take it home and grade it. Because I'm trying to expand their interest levels. It may mean they have to discuss it the next day. To remind them what we're doing. They're all, I think almost without exception, crazy to show off. When I assign parts for a play they have absolutely no inhibition about wanting the leading part which is strange to me but they all want to be in something like that.

Probably the most sympathetic response to these classes came from the science teacher quoted earlier who held that the inability to read is their single distinguishing characteristic. But he found it one which presented an insuperable barrier with which neither his training nor the surrounding school system gave him resources to cope. At Dale where there was a range of achievement the least sympathetic explicit response probably was that of a teacher who responded to my request to observe her class as I followed a student with the reply that I might but it was a shame since this is "my dumb class." At Fillmore where the majority of students were low achievers, often teachers expressed unbridled hostility both about the students to an outsider and toward the students in class.

Since I had chosen the schools for their concentrations of students who had migrated from Appalachia to Avon, I asked each teacher if they were aware of these students as a special group or category. No teacher at either school said that he or she had any sense of which individuals belonged to this category or what their special characteristics might be. Some were aware that students referred to others as "rednecks" or "hillbillies" and thus they knew that some children came from such a background, but they had little idea of which individuals did so or how that fact had any effect on their relationship to the school and its tasks.

Among the administrators and counselors, there was a universal awareness that students identified themselves and others by these slang labels. But only two, partially three, of the seven persons in these categories interviewed were themselves aware of special characteristics of these students or thought their backgrounds affected their relationship with the school. (Those who did think this background important thought so emphatically.)

Teachers were more aware of the black students as a special group whose attitudes toward the school might be distinctive. However, even in this context they thought of these differences mainly in terms of a lack of the skills or the docility which make able and willing scholars and peaceful denizens of school corridors.

Sometimes, especially at Fillmore, teachers spoke of the problems of the "families" in the area as a source of children's difficulties at school. They referred especially to illegitimacy and broken or reconstituted families, to neglect of children, or responsibility for younger siblings. They usually discussed these problems with tales of the situation of individual children--almost always black. But counselors who dealt with the families found similar conditions, especially responsibility for siblings, to be widespread among the poor white families as well.

To the extent that teachers did perceive that many of the students from poor families labored under stressful circumstances at home, they considered this simply a drain upon their resources which made it difficult for them to put forth the psychic energy required in school. As one of the teachers who worked hardest at treating students with civility and patience put it, they were "poor souls". No one asked if their experience might create special perspectives which made them define the mission and activities of the school in ways different from the staff. No one asked if their difficulties might indicate a need to develop a special curriculum for them.[1]

In Canton all of the teachers, assigned as they were to classes of different track levels and so of different social composition, had an experience of large difference in students' approach to their school experience. The faculties then divided, openly in ideological warfare or quietly and privately, over whether it was best as the participants in one argument put it "to suit their tastes" or "to teach them the tastes to have suited".

In Avon these debates did not take place overtly or covertly. The faculty cultures and the other experiences of the teachers included such a sharing of assumptions that even teachers profoundly frustrated with their inability to teach the standard curriculum to some of their students did not think to search for essentially different pedagogical strategies. Again, there is some evidence that a very small group of teachers at Dale did search for such alternatives and in fact practice some of them. But they did so quietly, without challenging those colleagues who had no doubts of the propriety of their own methods or offering an example to those

who were frustrated enough to accept an alternative.

In such a situation the differences among teachers--and there were noticeable and significant differences--stemmed from their talents and personalities, not from conscious pedagogical philosophy or method. There were differences in intellectual ability and intellectual engagement with the subject matter and in the seriousness of dedication to creating learning. There were differences in imagination in presenting material or responding to classroom interaction. There were differences in personal confidence and in the ability to take a position firmly and convincingly. And there were important differences in simple human empathy or decency which affected communication across barriers of social definitions and experiences. These differences affected the character of activity and interaction in a class hour and the relationship of teachers and students.[2] But before discussing classroom interaction and its variations, it is important to know more about the other party to the action, the students.

## STUDENTS' DEFINITION OF THE SCHOOL

In Canton, students in top academic tracks sometimes argued with their teachers over what to study. They argued also over their desire to follow a line of thought developed in a discussion even when it did not lead where the teacher wished to go. Students in low ability classes were less likely to contest these matters, but they did hold teachers to scrupulous standards of consistency and unarguable evidence as they dispensed punishment for classroom misdemeanors. Further, black students in middle and high tracks argued vociferously for the inclusion of black art, literature, history, etc. in the curriculum and extracurriculum.

If any of Avon's students questioned the teachers' consensus upon the character of a school and the nature of teaching, they did not make their views publicly visible. I neither saw nor heard of any student challenges to the propriety of following a text closely in recitation directed by the teacher. Students did not seek to broaden the questions asked or to follow discussion afield as they led into related considerations. Nor did they generally question the right of teachers to punish them for inattention or noncooperation in class.

However, if they did not question the legitimacy of teachers' academic and disciplinary direction of class activity, they by no means offered consistent active cooperation with it. Further, if they thought a teacher to be failing in the proper discharge of his duties as commonly defined, they might comment upon the fact or even refuse to obey him.

In Avon as in Canton, students in classes at different levels of academic ability differed in the kinds of actions of teachers they most resisted and in the ways that they resisted them. The different populations and different cultures of the two schools

also affected the kinds of challenges students offered.

The students in the top classes at Fillmore were from families of modest status, and they were as a group not as academically advanced as the top classes at Dale. Thus these classes at Dale were in a category by themselves. They generally offered overt resistance only to teachers they judged not to be teaching competently. One teacher in the sample observed for a day who had several such classes was the target of indirect commentary in every one. Field notes record the students' tone:

> [Fourth period. The teacher has just given a demonstration for which the students gathered at the front of her room.] When he finishes, less than five minutes probably, they talk as they return to their seats. Some one says, "Well, that's it for the day. We've had our lesson." Mr. Cadbury sits at his desk and says nothing for a while. The students chat. Then he looks up and tells them to get out their books. . . .
>
> [He assigns four pages in their books to read. While they are reading a buzz of conversation arises. Some questions about the day's assembly are directed to the teacher who answers them at length. Then:]
>
> After a while he says, "May I have your attention?". He tells them he will be handing out question sheets which they should save to use for study sheets. Remember the test will come from these. Some one must have mumbled that these were easy, because Mr. Cadbury, looking toward the far corner of the room, says, "Yes, they're easy if you study."
>
> [The students work on the sheets, then the class goes over them to check the students' answers.] There are scattered comments through this process which put down Mr. Cadbury in oblique ways. One girl keeps saying, "I know that!" in a funny voice, making fun, evidently, that one easily knows that. . . .
>
> When they finish the sheets, Mr. Cadbury says, "Good, you moved fast on that." A student says, "Yup, you taught us all that in ten minutes." The implication is that not much had been learned in the period. But the student did not say it directly <u>to</u> Mr. Cadbury. He ignores it.

This class was the most direct in criticizing Mr. Cadbury's pattern of presenting little work and stretching it over a long time. He maintained the same pattern in other classes. They too made comments which were audible to all but not made in a regular voice and not addressed directly to the teacher. The comments did not require an answer from him. They were expressive grumbling, not intended to institute a confrontation or to create change in the situation. Mr. Cadbury's patience wore a little thinner as the day went along, and though the classes became more indirect in their criticisms, he made more disciplinary threats and cutting comments. However, he rarely carried out the threats and the students took on an attitude of teasing designed to show their

rejection of this as a proper teaching situation while remaining short of direct defiance. For example:

> The group of three girls was singing slightly. Mr. C said, "Ann!" She protested she was not singing. Mr. C said, "That's all right. I yelled one name and all three stopped." Then he said, "Go ahead. Only it will cost you thirty." (It wasn't clear if this was minutes of detention or points for the day or what.) They did not seem impressed.
>
> Later on at the end of the period when the work really was done, they were singing softly again. Mr. C said, "Girls, it wouldn't be so bad if you could sing." One of them said "You're just jealous." Mr. C responded, "Kelley, you're not in too good a standing anyway. You'd better be careful or you can go down to the office and sing for Mr. Alexander." [Vice Principal.] Ann says--as though having a bright new idea--"Oh that would be fun!" She looks around as though for assent from the other two to get up and go.

Mr. Cadbury's classes were not typical of those at Dale. Generally, the pace was fairly brisk. Mr. Cadbury had most of his teaching experience in another unrelated subject, and he volunteered in his interview that he found himself caught short in the substance, needing to review, and also unfamiliar with the best way of organizing an hour in this very different subject. He alleged further that he believed in a relaxed teaching style which permitted students to discuss a variety of matters with the teacher.

Mr. Cadbury was one of the most explicit of Avon teachers in discussing his teaching style--quite possibly because he was not following the common pattern of the school and felt the need to justify his differences. The students' response to his classes was rather like high track ones in Canton with teachers who were weak in subject matter but easygoing. The students make clear their objection to his not really teaching them and therefore having insufficient grounds to demand constant quiet and attention. But having made their stand clear, they do not push him beyond his level of tolerance. He in turn accepts a good deal of criticism by ignoring it or treating it jocularly, but does draw lines beyond which he will at least make the classroom an unpleasant place for the students to spend their time. An uneasy truce is established.

In other high ability classes at Dale where teachers kept up a steady pace of academic activity, students generally were attentive and compliant. Individuals might occasionally daydream or whisper, but they responded quietly to reprimand. The strongest challenge in these classes was over the issues of grades. A student might, for example, complain that "No one told us that question would count four points!"

At Dale even the low ability classes were more attentive and compliant as a whole than those at any of the schools in Canton

or those at Fillmore. Teachers stressed tests and work sheets which often required the whole hour. Students worked on these fairly attentively. They worked quietly on tests. With work-sheets they generally chatted amiably with one another, sometimes about the work and sometimes about private concerns. The noise level was generally a quiet hum but occasionally would rise to that of persons talking in a public room before or after a meeting, at which point the teacher would generally intervene and quiet would reign for a while. There was little baiting of teachers, tossing of papers, playful wrestling,etc.—all common activities in some low track classes at the other schools studied.

However, with two teachers who did not make strenuous efforts to teach, the class turned into a general conversation on private matters. There was some playful shoving among students and gentle teasing of the teacher. But these classes were not hostile to their teachers and challenged them only indirectly in failing to comply with their half-hearted exhortations to be quiet and work on the task at hand.

Classes of intermediate ability at Dale seemed to act more or less like those of high ability except that they were a little more restless and given to amiable conversation in any slight break in the class routine.

At Fillmore only English and mathematics classes were strictly constructed to be homogeneous in academic ability. Other classes were more heterogeneous, though academic ones were perceived by their teachers to be "generally" strong or weak with a few exceptions. Fillmore also had a much narrower range of social class in its students. Consequently, there were not the evident differences among the classes that there were at Dale and even more strikingly in Canton. In math and English the extremes were distinguishable, with the top classes being quiet and attentive while the bottom ones were restless and much less attentive. However, the homogeneity of the student body and the character of the school were such that the greatest differences in classroom behavior at Fillmore stemmed from differences in the teachers rather than those in the students.

The top classes at Fillmore were like intermediate classes at Dale. They were sometimes restless, talkative, or inattentive. But they responded to calls for quiet at leasttemporarily. Mixed classes and even, on some days, those at the bottom were with some teachers simply a little more restless in their seats and talkative with their neighbors and more expressive in their comments if given a chance to discuss. (A teacher who asked about the police and objected to the students' use of the term "cops", sparked a spirited response from his bottom level class. While their comments were expressed in strongly felt vernacular terms, they were seriously addressed to the question of the role and behavior of the police.)

But with other teachers both mixed and low ability classes sometimes expressed themselves in forceful contempt or anger at the

teacher. Some had nearly constant loud horseplay. Some examples:

> Miss Metzger asked a very tall black boy to take off his hat. He asked why. She said to show respect (and something else I could not hear.) He said "Respect for what? This is just school" She told him again to take it off and he did in an expressively casual way. As best I could see he put it on and took it off several times during the period.
>
> Melanie [a slim lightskinned black girl with a good figure] asks Mrs. Carr if she can move. Mrs. Carr says no. Melanie says, "It's hot over here," [against the wall on a hot humid spring day]. Mrs. Carr says, "I don't care.". . . Melanie turns to her worksheet for just a minute, then says quietly, "Well, it's going to happen." She and Annette, another black girl with whom she is apparently friends, get up deliberately. Annette goes to the front table by the window and sits down facing the rest of the class. Melanie takes something to the wastebasket, then slowly walks over to another desk near the window.
>
> [The scene is another class of Mrs. Carr's. All three boys named are white with long hair. All engaged in similar behavior throughout the period except for Jim who alternated between joining and restraining the others.]
> Jeff has his feet up on the desk and reads a book from the time he comes in and while the class is in progress. Mrs. Carr tells him to take his feet off the desk. Jeff asks why. Mrs. Carr says because I tell you to. Jeff says something like, "That's no reason." Jim says to Jeff, "That's enough," in some disgust. Jeff very slowly takes his feet down, carefully reading all the while.
> Douglas says some one has his pencil. He goes around trying to find it, accusing people. Finally, someone throws it to him, but misses. The others play catch with it, keeping it from him.

Since the low ability classes at Dale did not differ significantly in social and economic characteristics from those at Fillmore, we have to ask why none of them displayed the kind of behavior described here. The character of the school apparently plays a part. Further, the low and mixed ability classes at Fillmore did not display such behavior with every teacher. There were clear differences in the behavior both of similarly composed groups and of single individuals as they moved from one classroom to another. We therefore have to ask about the effect of the teacher upon students' behavior. But first we need to consider the effects of ethnicity.

I chose to study schools in Avon with significant proportions of Appalachian whites in hopes of being able to see the separate effects of minority race and low economic status on children's interaction with the school. In Canton, for practical purposes all the children of low status were also black; so the two factors were confounded.

In Avon there did seem to be differences in the way poor black students with low achievement and poor Appalachian whites with low achievement interacted with the school. It was evident to an observer in the corridors that the black students were loud and visible in that context. They moved through the halls in boisterous clusters. In classes their behavior was less distinctive. At Dale when there were only one or two in a class they were often quiet and withdrawn. At Fillmore where they were likely to form a large minority, they were frequently also boisterous in the classroom.

However, this noisy sociable behavior did not seem to be related to greater involvement than white students in actionable disruptive behavior. All the disciplinary officers asked agreed that blacks and whites appeared before them about in proportion to their presence in the school. The new assistant principal at Dale who came from a rural white background admitted that he was surprised at this and at the overwhelming support of black parents for the disciplinary action he had taken. He described the differences in the races thus:

> I don't believe you can really say that the blacks are any more of a problem on a percentage basis. . . . If you learn to understand that they're going to be congregating in the hallway, together and that they're a little louder, it's hard to tell the difference between the black and white student, as far as disciplinary actions.

The "home-school" counselor at Dale worked as a liason between the two settings and thus had more contact with families and children seen as individuals than anyone else. She described the difference between the black students and the white students of Appalachian background in this way:

> The blacks at this particular time, are far more aggressive, far more verbal. The Appalachian kids are more withdrawn. If they don't do something, they just don't say anything about it. It doesn't get done, but they don't <u>say</u> anything about it. The blacks are much more, they talk much more aloud, they'll talk back to teachers, they'll say an assignment was not fair or something like this. So there's a lot more verbal confrontation and a lot more expression of things from the blacks.

The same assistant principal at Dale described the families of the students newly arrived from rural Appalachia as having a withdrawn and extreme attitude toward the disciplinary infractions of their children:

> We'll have one family come in and, "Well, you know, Susy don't want to go to school anyhow, and I don't care if she's truant, you know. She's gonna quit when she's 16." And the other one will come in and they look at it,

"Well, I don't have much of an education, and I don't have a good job. By golly, I'm gonna see that you get an education and you're gonna do this or I'm gonna beat the living daylights out of you." That's the two extremes, and we don't seem to have the inbetween with those families.

A counselor observed that the parents of the Appalachian children thought nothing of keeping them out of school for their own minor convenience--for example to watch younger children while the parent shopped for groceries which could as easily be gotten after school. Similarly they gave students neither support nor pressure for doing homework. The withdrawn behavior of students and their spotty effort was likely to be perceived as laziness by teachers unaware of its full context in the home and the rural assumptions of the home.[3]

The difference in race between black children and Appalachian children was also a difference in their visibility to one another, to peers, and to teachers as part of a separate group. The home-school counselor at Dale argued that the blacks' visibility had some positive effects in giving them a sense of cameraderie and an identity to interpret their different world view and life style to themselves and others. For the Appalachian students whose economic circumstances and life style were in many ways equally different from the main stream whites, there was no rallying point for mutual support or common proclamation to the surrounding context. They bore their differences in individual isolation in their own eyes and that of the teachers.

Of course the visibility of the black students had concomitant disadvantages. Students could not escape the identity it conferred upon individuals whether that identity fit in whole or in part or did not fit at all. And indeed if the black students' tight holding to one another and their loud tones had an air of defensiveness, it was one which was justified. Teachers at both Dale and Fillmore tended to speak of their problems with either poorly achieving or--especially--uncooperative children in one breath with the presence of black children. This was so despite the small number of black children at Dale and their somewhat higher average status than the whites at Fillmore. Teachers at Dale were aware of the small number and--when pressed--aware that significant numbers of white students presented similar problems in conforming with school expectations. Teachers at Fillmore would say--if asked--that the blacks were economically and educationally better off and the whites jealous. But as soon as they resumed speaking spontaneously of the life of the school they would equate trouble with black students and black students with trouble.

## CLASSROOM INTERACTION

Avon students at both the top and bottom of the academic and social scale may have questioned their teachers' goals and procedures

as little as they did in part because they had learned that such questioning would not be tolerated. In this Avon teachers responded differently from Canton teachers as a body. In both studies teachers were presented with the same group of five imaginary classroom situations (based on real ones in the Canton pilot study) and asked what they would do next. One concerned a girl who did not hand in homework with the class. When asked why, she said it was a "stupid assignment and she wasn't going to do it." Canton teachers generally gave one of two responses. They brushed the girl off with a shrug and a reminder that the zero would go on her record not the teacher's. Or they talked to the student after class and were open to the possibility that she might be right, or at least that the assignment was not effective for her in particular and should be modified. In Avon some teachers gave a similar shrug accompanied by a zero, but others expressed considerable shock and anger. Some would confer with the student, but always to reaffirm their own reasoning, never to inquire about the student's.

In classroom confrontations I observed, the Avon teachers, especially at Dale, responded to students' attempts to question the propriety of their acts with firm assertions of the teacher's sole right to define the situation. Some examples from a high ability English class at Dale with Mrs. Bruner:

> A girl objects (after they go over a test) "No one told us question three counted four points." Mrs. Bruner answers that it says a total of eighteen. They should be able to figure that out. To me she looks ever so slightly threatened, but her manner is firm and somewhat condescending. . . .
>
> As they read, she asked for a definition of a word. A student's reply is not what she wants. She says, "It could be that, or it could be . . . ."
>
> They go over spelling words and definitions. A girl says she found budget defined as a leather pouch. Mrs. Bruner says, "Are you sure you looked up the right word?" The girl says yes. Mrs. Bruner says, "It is probably not a preferred definition." (She thus dismisses it with her power of defining the situation.) It is in fact the first meaning given in my 1960 Websters. The first definition ends with "hence"; the usual is the fourth. Mrs. Bruner could have profitably discussed the way dictionaries order meanings.

Another example comes from a low ability "reading" class. A white boy named Ian has commented to no one in particular that he does not like the class and has failed to have paper on the regular day for a spelling test. Some one lends him paper at the teacher's request. Later, while they are going over the new list of spelling words:

> Mrs. Shamus said quite suddenly, "Ian, go to the office." I've been dimly aware of talk and movement to my left where he sits. But it was not loud or punctuated.

He says he wasn't doing anything. She replies that he should not have been standing up. He says he was just stretching. She says he was playing with other students. He starts to object again but she turns coldly away from him as he speaks and addresses another student. He goes out. He is back in no more than five minutes. He gives her a pass, then goes to the back of the room where he is quiet for the rest of the class.

Mrs. Shamus was a first year teacher. She had almost no training for the remedial kind of reading instruction needed in the class just described. Her competence with her high ability groups in a grammar lesson also appeared shaky. Further, she was unprepared for the behavior of lower class children. Yet her classes went along with reasonably good attention and compliance with her directions. It is instructive to ask how she obtained these ends.

Asked in the interview about sending children to the office, she said this was an effective threat. Students were afraid to see either the assistant principal or the principal. The mere threat would produce quiet, and when students were sent they usually came back chastized. Both principals in this school regarded such offenses as throwing paper wads to be serious. And both declared in their interviews that they want and expect teachers to send students to them for such offenses. The principal went on when asked about "minor" misbehavior that a student might be engaging in such behavior in several classes and so the administration wants them sent out so they will know about it. A teacher like Mrs. Shamus is therefore supported in maintaining control over her class by the practices of the administration. The generally good control of other teachers makes it possible for the principals to deal with small infractions.

Mrs. Shamus is also supported by the higher ability students' concern for their grades. She said in her interview that these students were very anxious about grades; anything lower than a B will seem disastrous to them. She underscored this anxiety and used it to support her control. Though she spoke of her high ability classes as her easy ones, they seemed to me to be just barely reined in much of the time. Consider the following series of exchanges in one high level class:

They come in and sit down and talk volubly with one another. The noise level is high, but not shouting, just many conversations in one room. The period starts at 12:30. They talk until 12:35. Then Mrs. Shamus says something I can't hear in the back. There is little response. She really shouts, "I want it quiet <u>right now</u>!" They stop talking virtually instantly. She goes over their dittoed spelling lists. . . . Then she tells them she will give them a little longer to study for the test. At least half of them chatter with each other again during this time.

Mrs. Shamus then says "Take out a sheet of paper and a pen. Put everything else away." They get ready and take the test very seriously. . . . At the twentieth word, their

heads and backs rise as if on springs. They have been numbering the words though Mrs. Shamus has not. She asks if that is the twentieth word. They say yes. They start to chat with one another. She says she has several announcements. . . . During these at one point chatting is audible again. She says loudly and a little angrily, "I'm not finished yet.". . .

At 12:50 they take their grammar books out. They work with these the rest of the period. Mrs. Shamus asks them what adjectival words are. No answer. "You have only to look at the cartoon," she says, somewhat condescendingly. No luck, no answers. She has a boy read the definition. She asks a couple more questions and gets no answers. She says, "How are we going to get an A on the test Friday if we (sic) can't remember things we learned last week?" She is scratching her fingers verbally at them; her voice has a prim or even prissy tone. She is also reminding them of her power over them.

She has them read from the book definitions of various kinds of adjectival words. Every time she asks a question of the class at large there is silence. They get to indefinite pronouns used adjectivally. A boy she calls on gets mixed up. She calls on four girls in succession. They give the right answers but after hesitation. One girl who answered crisply enough says "phew!" with an expressive gesture to a friend after the teacher's attention moves away from her.

Mrs. Shamus asks, "Is that enough? Do you understand? Now is the time to ask, not when the test comes. If you don't understand ask me now and I'll give you more examples and try to help you out." Silence. She asks a particular boy if he understands. He says yes. She goes on to the next topic. . . .

I have the feeling that she does not explain very well, that she can not explain very clearly. If the formal language does not get through, she seems unable to get outside it and explain in terms other than a formal definition. She doesn't really try to. . . .

These students seem neither enthusiastic nor secure in the class. They do not seem respectful of the teacher in general. They will chat while she talks or when they are supposed to study. But they do not make fun of her as they did of Mr. Cadbury (Ann does not sing in this class) and they do not voice any resistance to her. They seem intimidated in the face of her power to grade and anxious in the face of her inability to make clear the material which they are expected to master. Where other teachers whose competence in substance or in the means of control was weak chose to strike up a joking relationship with their students, Mrs. Shamus emphasizes her formal power. At Dale she can strengthen her lean personal resources for control with the punitive actions of the "Office" and the power of the grade. Other Dale teachers' control is similarly bolstered by these sources, but it is less obvious when they are better able to exert control independently.

The majority of teachers observed at Fillmore presided over classes which resembled those at Dale in general form. They were clearly directed by the teacher and stayed close to a text, worksheet, written homework assignment, or other body of information or questions and answers. They proceeded in a businesslike fashion with reasonable courtesy on the part of both teacher and students. However, the students in these classes were nonetheless noticeably more restless than those at Dale and the teachers responded with a greater flexibility and a more relaxed style in the conduct of the class. They allowed more quiet whispering, placing of heads on desks, or tossing of papers in the wastebasket. They also spent more time asking students to desist from these activities when they distracted other class members. And they perhaps also spent more time digressing from the lesson in interesting little asides meant to generate interest, goodwill, and a sense of rapport.

But the minority of teachers who did not get the general cooperation of their students was far more visible at Fillmore. On almost any hall during a class period, there would be loud noise emanating from at least one classroom. One of the teachers I followed for a day and another I observed twice while following students conducted these noisy classes. Within the classroom there was a chronic state of hostile opposition between the teachers and small groups of children in each class. The rest of the class might or might not join in passive cooperation with the rebels. Angry condemnations flowed freely in both directions.

It is significant that the examples given above of Fillmore students' angry defiance of school and teachers came from the classrooms of these two teachers. (A third teacher responsible for the "reading" class of the slow student I followed, asked me not to observe, telling me that the class engaged in unspeakably bad behavior and became worse with an observer. She told me this in the corridor in full hearing of several students lingering there.)

The following excerpts from field notes exemplify the tone of classroom conflict. In the singing class in which the tall boy left his hat on, Miss Metzger opened the class by:

> calling them to order in a drill major voice, It also had anger in it. She set an immediately oppositional tone. The boys responded with much noise and body language. The girls seemed withdrawn. I noticed Don among the clowning boys. [Don is a small black boy who is cooperative and answers capably in several classes with other teachers.]
>
> The boys seemed sporadic in their willingness to sing. At one of the points where they stopped while Miss M. gave directions the boys made noise again. Miss M. picked up her classbook in a warning way, then put it on the piano. Then she stopped dramatically, picked up the book and marked in it. Several of the boys leaned forward to see what she wrote. One protested, "I didn't do nothing!". She did not reply. She marked

in the book again later. . . .
The whole was typified at one point when they had just started singing and some children I could not see must have been talking. She broke into the sweet sounds of "The Candyman" with a bellowed "Shut up!"

Two sentences omitted from my earlier account of the two girls who moved their seats against Mrs. Carr's clear command indicate that, though the interaction may be indirect and nonverbal it takes two to make a confrontation:

Melanie asks if she can move. Mrs. Carr says no. Melanie says "It's hot over here." Mrs. Carr says, "I don't care." She yawns as she says it. She is grading papers at an empty desk near the open windows. Melanie turns to her worksheet then says quietly, "Well, it's going to happen." . . . (Omitted sentences underlined)

In another class I noted:

Mrs. Carr told Tim to do something. He started and then stopped. She repeated her request with mock, exaggerated courtesy. The effect of this was to suggest that courtesy was really out of place. If asked for it, she would make a joke of it.

In still another class with Mrs. Carr, the first nineteen minutes were taken up with setting up a nine minute film--even though she had run the film for other classes that day. The class was given no work to do while she got the film ready. During this time she conferred with a student needing assignments for a long absence, successfully moved several children for talking to their neighbors, and shouted at the class in general for quiet. She had a confrontation with a boy who was talking with another over whether he would move his seat when asked, in which she finally told him to "move or get out". She backed down when his partner quietly moved instead. When yet another boy was talking she told him to come to the back of the room where she was working with the projector. When he objected she shouted, "Back here, sir!" in a barking tone. Another teacher at Fillmore made conscious use of "sir" in addressing the boys as a means of bolstering their egos and maintaining good morale. He mentioned this to me, and probably to Mrs. Carr who used it on one or two other occasions similar to the one just mentioned.

Clearly, these teachers lacked the patience, empathy, and probably the competence in the subject matter which supported more successful teachers at Fillmore. They also lacked the support from the school at large upon which teachers at Dale were able to draw. The noise in classrooms was audible to students as well as staff. Students knew that some teachers were in chronic conflict with their classes, and they knew that individual teachers they might dislike were in a state of moderate war with other students. The principals, confronted with a much more unruly student body, were not as strict

in treating minor offenses as those at Dale. Further, they believed that teachers ought to handle minor offenses themselves. In contrast to the principals at Dale, they believed that it was teachers' responsibility to handle all but exceptional discipline problems. Teachers therefore could not subdue their classes with the threat of a visit to the principal.

Students quickly learned this. And whether the principals were in fact lenient in punishment or not, they learned to return from the office with an insouciant air. One of Miss Metzger's classes, which she had told me was very difficult, started with her leaving for the vice-principal who removed Douglas, a white boy who was noisy in several classes I saw. The class was quietly resentful, but not rebellious, until Douglas's return halfway through the period. He gave Miss Metzger a pass over which she made a little face. Then:

> Some one says something like, "You must have gotten it." He says, "Nope," and sits down with his foot up on the writing arm of his chair and his body slouched in a way intended to express nonchalant command of the situation.

The teacher was called briefly from the room, and the class refused to sing for an aide who replaced her, though they had asked to sing earlier. When Miss Metzger returned they baited her for the rest of the period.

## CLASSROOM CONTROL

We may ask what distinguished the "good" teacher in Avon from the "poor" teacher. Since this study was not designed to address the difficult problem of measuring differences in students' learning with different teachers, the good and poor teachers must be chosen on criteria of students' attentiveness, the absence of acrimony, and the presence of an apparent transfer of information, improvement of skills, or stimulation of thought.

The teachers whose classes demonstrated high levels of student attention and of apparent stimulation of learning had three sets of characteristics in common. They firmly imposed a clear structure on the activity of the class. They gave an impression of both confidence and competence in handling the substance of their subject. And they treated students politely and respectfully, even when they chided or corrected them. Despite differences in personal style and variations in the degree of each of these practices, in Avon teachers tended to display all three patterns or their opposite. Those teachers who were positive in all three found their classes at least passively acquiescent most of the time. Their occasional disorderly conduct was more often restless than rebellious or hostile, and these teachers usually had no trouble in containing it.

Those teachers who lacked all three positive characteristics would face the kind of continuous resistance evident in some classes at Fillmore. Dale teachers who did poorly were more likely to muster

at least one positive characteristic. Thus Mrs. Shamus did fairly well at imposing a clear structure on the activity of her classes, despite her shaky confidence and competence in the subject and her condescending manner toward students. Mr. Cadbury treated his classes with good humor most of the time despite his lax pace of activity and apparent lack of depth in the subject.

Now, to say that teachers' success with students depended upon these three characteristics is to do no more than to confirm the conventional wisdom of training in education. This is the case in part because both staff and students in Avon defined the educational task in conventional terms. The teacher's job was to take the class through reading, repetition, and examination of a textual body of material and the class's task was to cooperate. In such a situation both teacher and class have little difficulty in knowing when a teacher or a student is not behaving according to expectations. As long as both do follow expectations they may not embrace one another with enthusiasm and the students may or may not learn, but they will not experience the anger and conflict that comes from violation of normative expectations.

However, if one looks at the patterns of classes in Avon with those of Canton for perspective one learns a little more. First, one immediately notes the absence of varied goals among both teachers and students. In Canton, some teachers argued it was their responsibility to generalize educational goals from the incorporation of a specific body of knowledge to the acquisition of more generalized skills. Further, they argued that where students did not actively embrace educational goals, as many in both districts did not, it was their responsibility to seek ways to lure them into a more active part in the educational enterprise. They sought to tailor the curriculum to make it more spontaneously interesting, and they bargained with any extrinsic reward they could legitimately generate. Perhaps most important, they saw teaching unwilling students as a distinctive task. The first step was that of inciting the student's active cooperation in the learning activity. The learning could only come as a second step.

Teachers in Avon lacked any context or justification for such an analysis of their teaching problems or such a strategy of procedure. Teaching was teaching, no matter who the students.

Some teachers in Avon were astute enough observers and empathetic enough as human beings to be articulately aware that many of the children were not learning up to their mental potential and were uneasy in the school situation. But they had no intellectual context or social support for moving beyond this recognition to a systematic policy for analyzing and coping with these students' special problems or needs. They were simply a little kinder and a little more patient than others in following the prescribed curriculum.

The variety of educational goals and expectations among both teachers and students in Canton created a complex set of combinations. Analysis of these combinations made evident some underlying dimensions

of the teacher-student relationship which are less evident in the simpler contrasts of Avon. The variety of educational expectations and the pressures of students and community undercut most of the sources of control available to teachers other than authority. The teachers of Canton either learned to understand and wield authority in a way their students were willing to accept or faced endemic conflict. In Avon other forms of control were less eroded, and teachers were thus able to bolster their authority with other resources. They needed only not flagrantly to violate students' expectations.

In Canton it was evident that whether or not students could articulate their intuitions explicitly, they judged the validity of a teacher's claim to authority by whether or not the teacher seemed genuinely to be acting in the service of educational goals which justified his position of superordination. If a teacher's classroom command seemed, in the student's judgment not to serve legitimate educational goals, he would find it illegitimate and would be likely to express that feeling in some way in class.

There were three common reasons teachers' commands seemed illegitimate to students. One was that the activity ordered did not seem relevant to educational ends. Students were aware of the variety of educational goals envisioned by teachers, and so long as a teacher was consistent in serving one set they did not consider his exercise of authority illegitimate, although they might grumble about it. They likewise considered respectful decorum and reasonable quiet in which to work legitimate goals, though they might not spontaneously grant them. But if a command seemed to the students to be irrelevant to any educational goal, they would consider it illegitimate.

Further, though the teacher might set up reasonable goals, if he seemed to the students to be repeatedly incompetent in seeking them, they would begin to refuse his commands as legitimate authority. Finally, if he set up reasonable goals and sought them competently, but exerted his authority in a manner which defined the students as unable to fulfill their student role in a manner worthy of respect, or if he gave additional orders which asked for simple personal obedience unrelated to legitimate classroom goals, they would rebel.

In other words, the students would refuse to accept the commands of a teacher who did not consistently make them in such a way that the relationship of command and obedience could be seen to exist for the furthering of education and the reasonable decorum which facilitates its pursuit in the classroom. Irrelevant orders, incompetent orders, and a manner implying they can not learn all transform the relationship from one of authority into one of simple personal dominance. A significant number of students in each class would resist such a relationship.[4]

If we look once more at the characteristics separating successful from unsuccessful teachers in the classrooms of Avon, we find them very similar to the ones separating teachers who wielded

acceptable or unacceptable authority in Canton. The competence of the teacher and his respect for the student are important in both contexts. (Both of these qualities establish the teacher's genuine pursuit of educational ends.) In Canton not all teachers who were seeking educational goals ran a firmly structured classroom as it was defined in Avon. But in more indirect ways all did set out ends to be sought and acceptable procedures for seeking them, even though these might allow for movement and conversation among students during the class hour or for the pursuit of information and skills through non-traditional projects and materials. In Avon with its greater consensus on educational goals and means both among teachers and between teachers and students, to be legitimately pursuing education was to be running a firmly structured, teacher-centered classroom. Thus, in Avon too, the teachers with whom students were uncooperative were those who were in some way violating the legitimacy of their relationship of authority with students.

Although any teacher whose students will not accept the legitimacy of his claims to authority--in the sense of his giving commands that further educational ends--will have difficulty with control, authority by itself is seldom a sufficient basis for control of a classroom. If we review other important forms of control, it becomes evident that the importance of authority was so clearly visible in Canton because teachers had few resources for other forms of control. In Avon these were far more available.

Of course one important form of control is personal influence. It has long been part of the folk wisdom that attractive young teachers of either sex, those with a gift for humor, those with that elusive quality of personal magnetism now often referred to as charisma,[5] and those with the skills of listening sympathetically and talking persuasively will have an easier time than others in controlling their classes.[6] These qualities tend to vary with the individual rather than the social setting.

A second form of control, more institutional in character, might be called arrangement of the situation. This form of control does not require personal communication or confrontation, but rather consists in one person's ability to control the physical or social context in which another must act. The ultimate form of this is probably the assembly line which dictates the worker's motions and speed in great detail without any direct contact between controller and controlled.[7] In schools there is no necessary technology which determines the form of activity. The many new forms of learning which have received public attention in the last fifteen years suggest a state of search in education at large and a potential freedom for teachers (or students) to choose from a wide range of options in structuring school or classroom activity. At the same time, entrenched traditional forms of instruction persist with a kind of social and psychic inevitability in many settings, of which Avon is one. For both teachers and students, it is an unquestioned fact of life that classes consist of one teacher and students engaging in a small assortment of activities including listening, reading, discussion (more often recitation in practice), and the answering of

oral or written questions. Students accept these activities as the inevitable requirements of life in classrooms, and it does not occur to them to resist efforts to impose them.

Within the context of the expected activities of the classroom, even when these are given in some detail, each teacher does need to work out routines for weekly and daily activities. If he works out a schedule of activities for each week, students will come to see this also as inevitable and will not argue for spending more time on a given activity when it is time to change. If the teacher works out smooth routines for chores such as taking roll and passing back papers, he will avoid the idle time which breeds distracting activity. With their general orientation toward structure and detailed direction by the teacher, Avon teachers generally developed these routines systematically and ran them smoothly. The majority of teachers saw to it that there was a task demanding students' attention throughout the class period. Because there was so little variation among teachers in the general manner of running a class, students tended to accept these tasks and routines as a simple given of school existence. In Canton, with teachers' varied strategies and many students' expectations that they should have a part in defining classroom ends and means, arrangement of the situation was a far more problematic means of control.

Certainly a common and important source of control is the use of many forms of social exchange. Since school attendance is involuntary and no wages or promotions are given, teachers may find themselves with limited resources for exchange. In the elementary grades, affection and gold stars are important rewards.[8] In the more impersonal secondary schools, these lose their importance, but grades become increasingly significant.

In Canton the students in the top classes, secure in the high occupational position of their parents and in apparently easy access to the highly regarded state university, had little anxiety over grades. Some earned very erratic ones, because they did not work in classes where they disagreed with the teachers. They seemed unaffected by the low grade as a sanction. Students in the low tracks also saw grades as having little value. Especially with these students, teachers were often driven to generating informal resources for exchange, such as the non-enforcement of school rules, in return for cooperation.

In Avon, on the other hand, students of average and above average achievement were keenly conscious of grades. These formed a powerful resource for control, and some teachers reminded students frequently of the bearing of their actions on their grades.[9] However, the below average classes in Avon were less anxious for high grades. They were also less cooperative.[10]

Finally, the popular image of "discipline" or even of "control" in the school is heavily tinged with coercion. There are many forms of coercion: sarcasm and shaming, detention, assignment of janitorial tasks, and paddling are some of the most common available

to classroom teachers. However, watchful parents and community groups, supported by numerous court decisions have set limits on the more explicit forms of coercion. In Canton, upper middle class parents were jealous of their children's rights and freedoms and thus limited severely the routines to which they could be subjected, much less the coercive sanctions which could be used against violators of routines. Parents and community groups monitored the severity and equality with which sanctions were used against black students. The paddle was outlawed and a tenured teacher dismissed at midyear for physical handling of unruly boys which would have seemed the merest routine in some inner city schools.[11]

In Avon parents and community groups were only beginning surveillance of coercive practice. Nonetheless, both administrators and teachers were keenly aware of their potential complaints, and this pressure figured strongly in teachers' conceptions of their available resources for control. They were also aware that court decisions on a national level indicated the restrained use of coercion. At the same time, the paddle was still very much a part of junior high school life in Avon. It had to be used in the presence of a witness and was usually used by administrators. But it was used frequently. (Administrators at both schools estimated that it rarely rested for a whole week. It was sometimes used several times in a day, then perhaps not again for several days.)

All of these forms of power, used in the same school by the same persons, will have a different effect on different kinds of students. Not surprisingly, as a whole they succeed least well with students of both low socio-economic background and low achievement. These students see themselves as gaining nothing very useful from school. Since they are unable or unwilling to progress very far or fast with the work, school and each class become a form of unproductive captivity. Even though they may grant the legitimacy of the teacher's exercise of authority, they do not necessarily obey his commands. For they do not share the educational goals which justify those commands. (However, they will be far more unruly if the teacher does not make the effort to teach them, to help them progress, for that is an insult. They are keenly aware that they <u>should</u> want to learn and should actually learn.) Similarly, even if each teacher's conduct of the class hour is consonant with the inevitable character of a school, it may still be something to resist. Grades have little value as exchange for students' whose work is predominantly poor.

It is with these students then that teachers have serious problems of control. Personal influence is often of use only to moderate the resistance of persons so alienated from the dominant enterprise. Coercive resources are slim and dwindling. Even in Avon where resources for control were high compared to Canton, it was constantly problematic at Fillmore, the school where such students were present in large numbers.

In discussing classroom interaction, I have made several references to the impact of the character of the schools as wholes. Let

us turn now to an investigation of their overall atmosphere as contexts for students and teachers and especially to the exercise of control in the school at large.

## THE CONTEXT OF CONTROL IN THE SCHOOLS AT LARGE

The character of Dale and of Fillmore as whole schools was determined in large part by the nature of the students and adults who entered each school. The reputation, location, and plant of the schools also played a part.

It is important that Dale had a mixed student population. It drew from an elementary school in the most depressed black section of the city, and most of its blacks came from this, the poorest, black area. It drew from a new interracial public housing project which was rapidly gaining a bad name. And it drew from a depressed section on the city outskirts with a reputation as the most dilapidated point of first entry for migrants from rural Appalachia. There were thus both black and white students who came from straitened economic circumstances and rundown physical surroundings with the social disorganization usually associated with those conditions. But there were also large numbers of children from the comfortable professional and executive families of Pleasant Glade. And there were quite a few from settled white working class families as well.

At Fillmore, though the black area was a step up from Dale's black area, there was a high proprotion of white students from circumstances worse than the blacks. And even the children at the top of Fillmore's social hierarchy came from families of only modest means and occupational accomplishment.

It was the mixture of students at both schools which seemed most important. At Dale the tone was set by students from secure families, well versed in the ways of school, with expectations that it would help them on their way. Other students were present in addition. They did not determine the style of general student behavior, and they did not play as large a part in the teachers' images of students. The school was organized for those students who could easily cope with its curriculum, as the middle and secure working class students could. Students who could not were at the periphery rather than the center of attention.

At Fillmore, on the other hand, the students who could not or would not cope straightforwardly with the curriculum were the visible students. They set the tone for student behavior. The students who wanted to and did apply themselves successfully to the curriculum were quieter and less assured of their place in the school. The teachers were most aware of the resistant students, whom they experienced as a majority,

though they probably were not so numerically. It takes only a very small number of students to keep a whole class in turmoil. The diligent and capable students were at the periphery of teachers' attentions.

It was also important for life in the school at large at Fillmore that the blacks came from home situations which often gave more economic and educational advantages than those of many of the whites. The white students resented the blacks' advantages. In the semi-southern atmosphere of Avon, and with the large number of migrants from rural Kentucky and Tennessee, whites were especially likely to resent such advantages and the attitudes which went with them. Tensions among the students were therefore high. Small conflicts between individuals across racial lines could kindle smoldering resentments in larger groups.

The location and plant of the two schools differed in ways that re-enforced the effects of the differences in the student bodies. Both buildings were two story structures of red brick, built in the typical fortress style of the early part of the century. But Dale's building was embellished with some Gothic decoration. And it sat in the heart of Pleasant Glade at the top of a rise which looked down to a large wooded park, across a square block of playing fields, and toward comfortable single family houses. Fillmore also stood on rising ground, though not quite at the top of the rise. But it was surrounded with desolate vacant lots, rundown houses, and a partially commercial street of warehouses and small scattered stores. The grass of its lawn and playing fields straggled while Dale's was lush. The black top directly next to the school which contained basketball hoops but was used for faculty parking was often littered with glass. Both students and teachers were bound to experience different feelings upon approaching the two schools each morning.

Inside the buildings were less strikingly different but still significantly so. Both were painted in light pleasant colors and both had classrooms with plenty of daylight. However, Dale had been built piecemeal, some of it fairly recently. The most important result of its growth pattern and age were its acoustical properties. The school had four wings, some of which contained niches or small wings of their own. As a consequence most of the halls were relatively short. The newer ones had low ceilings and were made of materials which absorb sound. Thus, even though Dale was a much larger school than Fillmore, its halls were so constructed as to minimize the noise which occurs between classes when a whole student body moves from room to room. At Fillmore the ceilings were high and the walls made of plaster which reflected every decible of sound in echoing crescendo. Since a high level of sound encourages people to raise their voices to be heard, the effect was cumulative.[12]

The behavior of the students in the two schools at large varied noticably. At Dale, the halls were generally quiet. At the end of a homeroom period when the business was done, one could see students talking and moving about through the glass windows of some classroom doors, and one might hear the muffled sounds while going down the hall, but generally the halls were hushed. At Fillmore, the conversation at this time was loud and pervasive. It echoed into the halls. And in the spring it flowed out the open windows in which two or three students were likely to be congregated in each classroom commenting on the scene below.

As students moved between classes, the halls at Dale were full of people and conversation in normal tones. The sound of this "passing" was not audible as one approached the outside doors. At Fillmore, the halls echoed and the sound was clearly audible outside. Further, at Dale students generally proceeded briskly on their way though occasional groups might pause and dally. At Fillmore there were large knots and traffic jams especially in one place where the stairs and a main first floor hall met. This was also right by the door to the secretary's and principals' offices--to the dismay of some teachers.

As adults described events, fights were a regular occurrence at Fillmore, and they frequently took place in the hall.[13] At Dale, though they happened, they seemed a less common and less routine event. Further, there was some evidence that students waited until they were outside the school to have some of their fights. I have already described the more compliant and less hostile tone of classroom behavior at Dale then at Fillmore.

The measures of order and disorder I have given here are imprecise, and necessarily somewhat subjective. They are lent some objectivity by the possibility of comparison between the two schools (and implicity with the schools of Canton). But adults and students in a school shape their behavior according to their subjective assessments of the degree of order, rather than according to the actual amount which might be measured by systematic tallies. For many purposes perceptions of orderliness which may vary within and between categories of participants are more important determinants of action than are actual amounts.

Thus, I was truly struck by the quiet prevailing in Dale's halls. In contrast not only to Fillmore but to the schools of Canton and to others I had visited more briefly, the students seemed remarkably decorous and the resulting environment (affected also by the architecture) to be peaceful. But one of the adults who was most relaxed about the need for decorom was very surprised when I mentioned this impression. To her, with limited experience in schools, they were boisterous. The principal was dismayed by the level of hall order and

spent considerable energy urging the faculty to firmer supervision.

Subjective impressions are even more important in shaping definitions of the overall character of schools. Fillmore had a bad reputation in the community at large. One of the counselors who visited parents of incoming seventh graders during the summer reported that those without older children were apprehensive about sending their children to the school. Some were considering moving before the fall, and a few did so. Those with older children were more resigned and more attuned to the practical question of strategies for coping. Fillmore's bad image also affected the feelings of students. Some adults held that some of the visible students felt bound to live up to the reputation and were actually spurred by it to rebellion and to conflict with peers.

Dale had a reputation as a diverse school, drawing as it did from the highest and lowest status elementary schools of the city. One of the counselors was struck in talking with sixth graders at the feeder schools that those from the affluent districts asked about electives and extracurricular activities and other pleasant extras, while those from the poorer districts asked about the prevalence of fights and the best ways to cope among a student body they pictured with some trepidation.

With this mixture of students it was possible for one group to dominate in formal and informal activities and in setting the tone of the school. The higher status children--assisted by the adults--did so. It is significant that much of the fighting among the other students occurred outside school walls and often off school grounds.

The different characters of the schools had significant effect on the attitudes, emotions, and behavior of teachers. The teachers at Fillmore were acutely aware that they were teaching at the secondary school which was considered the bottom of the barrel. It was difficult to recruit new teachers for Fillmore. Most came from outside the district. And teachers believed that it was difficult for them to transfer out of Fillmore as well. There was a formal process of application for transfer which had then to be approved by both sending and receiving principals. Teachers said that Fillmore teachers were often not successful and that they also hesitated to apply lest they alienate their sending principal with whom they would most likely remain.

The suspicion thus hung in the air, never explicitly articulated, that the teachers assigned to Fillmore were perceived by the district to be the least capable and the least valuable. Many teachers felt trapped in an unsatisfactory situation from which there was no viable escape except to move to another district or out of teaching.

In this context, many of the teachers were defensive about the school, as well as about their own talents. Some of them were at pains to tell me of opportunities they had had to go elsewhere which they had turned down for various reasons. Some were concerned lest the study of the school further darken its name in the city. Others responded to the study in the opposite way with relief to have a sympathetic outside observer of their trials and listener to their tribulations. But almost all seemed to find that the character of the school and the students posed a threat to their own personal and professional self-respect.[14]

At Dale, on the other hand, teachers defined themselves and their work in terms of the better students. Schedules were generally arranged so that all teachers worked with students throughout the academic and social range of the school. Thus all could be teachers of cooperative students who generally learned the material, though they also taught some classes of less cooperative and successful students. Despite the presence of some unruly students, the halls and classrooms were not generally stressful contexts, at least compared to Fillmore's, and the daily emotional wear and tear upon the teachers was consequently less than at Fillmore. Both the community and teachers would describe Dale as a school which had difficulties, but Fillmore as a difficult school.

One exceptional case sheds light on the sources of the teachers' moods at the two schools. A teacher at Dale who had been ill was given a special schedule of the five highest classes in his subject, while the other teacher received the lowest five. In the event, the teacher was too ill to return and the two teachers who inherited the unusual schedules decided it would be fairest to trade classes at midyear. I followed the teacher receiving the low groups in the spring for a day in the study. He was one of the most conscientious and sensitive of Dale's teachers. An experienced teacher who had been at Dale several years, he displayed above average competence, patience, kindliness and sense of humor in his classes. He also displayed frustration and anger.

More than most Avon teachers he spoke of trying to engage the children's interest in the subject. And more than most he seemed to have a ready human empathy with them. When I first asked over lunch to see one of his classes while I followed a student in poorly achieving classes, he expressed some dismay. He explained to a colleague that "it's embarrassing" to have some one see that class.

In facing the students in these classes he found himself without adequate tools. He expressed an unwillingness to have them merely copy or fill in blanks as the teacher for the first semester had done, and as they were content to do. He took a day a week to work on reading with them, though this was not part of his curriculum. But he had not found any very effective way to get them to progress. In the

interview he expressed much frustration and discouragement over the task.

Now this teacher had taught students like this before in his years at Dale. But when he worked solely with them, it clearly undercut his morale in several ways. He felt frustrated at the lack of progress he was able to make. He felt embarrassed at both this lack of progress and the (relatively) unstudious behavior of the students. He felt wearied and worn from the effort of trying every period to prod students to effort and accomplishment despite the obstacles of lack of interest, attention and skill.

This teacher felt far more frustrated than he had before, and than others around him, in working a single semester solely with such students. One can ask if several years of such work with little hope for change would not be far more corrosive. The hostility toward students of some of the Fillmore teachers becomes more understandable in this light.

This teacher's sensitivity and genuine concern to make progress with all the students resembled those of an identifiable group of teachers in Canton who were generally especially concerned about the lower class students in the lowest tracks. But these teachers had higher morale than the Dale teacher, and that morale seemed to be attached to three supports which he lacked. First, they taught high as well as low achieving classes. Second, they were part of a school system which was making a conscious effort to set an educational example with schools integrated by both race and class and with special efforts to reach all children who achieved poorly. In other words, these teachers had support from the district and the community in focusing their efforts upon these students and in groping as they tried to find effective methods. Third, these teachers had an ideology about the most effective ways to reach such students. The ideology was shared with some other teachers in the school. It also required for its full realization certain conditions in the school as a whole which were not present in the Canton schools. These teachers were making their efforts in supportive company and they were working under conditions such that failure, or at least lack of startling success, could be easily attributed to other sources than themselves.

The teacher at Dale and the Fillmore teachers as a group lacked these supports as they dealt with poorly achieving students. In Avon, the community and the schools did not recognize different categories of students. All were officially alike and failure an individual matter. Teachers had no ideological support, except that lent by various ideas in popular culture.

When children failed or engaged in classroom hijinks, the question of the sources of their poor achievement and behavior

could not be answered with a common and comforting social creed. There were only a few possible answers available for these teachers and none was very helpful in giving strength for their task. The first and doubtless most disturbing hypothesis was that the children learned and behaved badly because of deficiencies in the teacher. A second was that they learned and behaved badly because of deficiencies of ability or will in themselves. A third was that they did so because of deficiencies in the conduct of the school, or the school system, as a whole.

This question must arise in the minds of all teachers whose students do not learn well and behave within manageable limits. The less teachers have a developed ideology to explain these failures, the more the first and most disturbing answer is likely to haunt them. In such a situation the anxiety caused is likely to be turned outward in anger at either the students or the administration or both. Those who do not turn it outward, but decide the fault is in themselves are likely to leave the school or the profession.

The teachers at Fillmore were very anxious and very angry. The least competent in subject matter and least effective in running a smooth class were the most anxious and the most angry. It was easy there to start a vicious circle in which students' lack of learning and unruly behavior drew anxiety and hostility from teachers which then increased students' hostility. Or the teacher might start the circle. Once launched its origin became obscure. Even those teachers who coped reasonably well in their own classrooms felt frustrated by their situation. This feeling often emanated in anger at the administration, which with its responsibility for the tone of the school, was seen as the party guilty for the lack of general seemliness and diligence.

The Fillmore faculty almost universally described their relations with one another as tight and mutually supportive. They socialized off the job as well as at school, and they cooperated and cheered one another. However, the dominant theme of this mutual support was the strengthening of defenses against the threats of the situation. In the faculty lounge much time was spent in discussing the actions and characteristics of students in derogatory ways. Conversations accusing the school or district administration of failure to be firm enough in controlling the children were held more discreetly, but to judge from statements in interviews they were held fairly frequently. It seemed to this observer and to some informants that the most active participants in discussions in the lounge were likely to be teachers who had more difficulty with students than most. Those who had less difficulty--and more sympathy--with students were likely to be quiet.

Thus it is possible to see the greater noise, activity, and hostility toward adults and one another among the Fillmore

students as partly a portion of a vicious circle of anger and accusation between students and teachers as both felt locked in a cycle of failure and rejection by each other and the surrounding community.

But let us turn now to the way that control was actually exercised over the students in the school as a whole. The faculty does most of the work here, but the principals as sources of policy, pronouncements, and punishment also played a key role.

## THE PRACTICE OF CONTROL IN THE SCHOOLS AT LARGE

Schools are organizations with more potential for resistance from their members and fewer resources to elicit cooperation from them than almost any others, with the exception of prisons and public mental hospitals. Although the school is supposed to be rendering the student a needed service, he is present involuntarily. He must attend school, and usually a particular school, until he reaches a certain age. Further, if he can not reject the school, the school can not reject him except in the most difficult cases and then after great effort. Thus the school has to deal with an involuntary and unselected clientele.[15]

Further, it has few rewards to offer this clientele in return for their cooperation. For some the work offered in classrooms will be intrinsically interesting, as will whatever extracurricular activities are available. For a somewhat larger group, the school is an accepted agency which trains them in skills they expect to need--whether they enjoy them or not. It also is an agency which can offer them grades and positions in the extracurriculum which will help them to maintain or attain high social status as they progress through the educational and occupational systems. For some, largely from the same groups, it offers opportunities for pleasure or identification in association with adult models outside family and immediate neighborhood. But for many students, these rewards seem either unattainable or unimportant. Some students get poor grades, do not attain visible positions in the extracurriculum, do not expect to maintain respectable status or to increase their status through accomplishment in school, and do not find teachers persons with whom they can identify or whose company is rewarding. These students do not perceive the school to be offering them much of worth. It therefore has little to give them as exchange for their cooperation if non-cooperation is rewarding--as it often is.

Schools also have few coercive mechanisms with which to control students to raise the costs of non-cooperation making the pains not worth the pleasures. In addition to the sanctions available to teachers, disciplinary officers can put a note in the permanent file, suspend, or in exceptional circumstances

expel a student. While most of these actions are unpleasant to students, as they become familiar they become less painful. The cost may be worth the benefits. It is precisely those students who do not expect to gain from school who are least likely to be deterred by steps such as suspension and a note in the permanent file. Those who can not be controlled with exchange are least constrained by coercion.

Consequently, schools can not control their students by a direct and simple administration of rewards and punishments. The most effective methods require hiding from students the actual weakness of a school's resources for control, and creating in their minds the belief that it actually can respond in awesome ways. This is a common practice in social life, especially important in the maintenance of public etiquette. But it requires careful attention to mythbuilding when applied to only half-socialized young persons who are likely to test it.

The study of Canton suggested that there are two forms of this practice which are distinct, though they may overlap. The first relies upon the lack of experience and sophistication of young people to create a reality in school procedures which makes them seem inevitable laws of social behavior. Students perceive them as given, like the custom of driving on the right side of the road. This pattern works easily only when the students accept school as an appropriate part of life continuous with the general style of behavior they have learned at home. If school is a place which bestows benefits, or at least must be passably navigated in order to avoid losses, then it behooves the students to accept its customs without serious conflict. Further, and this is important, many of the physically and even sociably feasible ways of avoiding and resisting its requirements may never occur to them. Adults encourage this innocence with efforts to keep others' infractions from general knowledge. Even when students do think of violating rules in some way, they may expect the school to respond with awesome, though vaguely conceived, disapproval and punishment.

But where students do not expect to gain much from school, and where it requires them to alter their style of behavior significantly in order to participate acceptably, this form of control can not be fully realized. A second form of control, related to this one, requires establishing a myth of coercive power in the minds of students. Here there may be little they do not contemplate doing, but they may expect that the school will respond with swift and sure punishment. A school can not actually do this when many students violate rules. The lesser punishments lose their sting and the stronger simply can not be used wholesale. But the students need not know this. A demonstration of swift consistent punishment of the students who first test the waters each fall may lead students to think the school can muster coercive sanctions which still feel forceful. Both of these strategies involve establishing a

definition of the situation which does not quite fit "reality". But if students accept it, it is real for them. The construction of this social reality is then a kind of arrangement of the situation which controls students' actions without constant direct intervention by adults.

The first of these patterns does not discourage students from identification with the school or its adults as long as both follow acceptable patterns. But it does discourage flexible practices by teachers or experimentation by students. For example, frequent field trips, unlimited passes to the library, or noisy classroom activities can set precedents which undermine this form of control, however educationally valuable they may be.[16] It may also be at odds with a style of instruction which encourages students to ask fundamental questions about their surroundings. Certainly one definition of education, especially beyond the elementary grades, stresses the development of skepticism and independent thought. Such habits of mind, once encouraged, will find their own material. School procedures will quickly come under students' newly enlivened scrutiny.[17]

The second pattern does discourage students' identification with the school, as it depends on regimentation of their activities for the sake of surveillance and generates a relationship of opposition between faculty and students. With skeptical and resistant students, a school which wants to induce learning has to change students' attitudes so that they do see the possibility of benefit from their experience. To accomplish that goal there must be a flexible program for such students. Teachers' strategies must vary in style and content from class to class and student to student. Such a mode of operation is diametrically opposed to the regimentation and standardized responses which maintain a myth of coercive power. Schools with resistant students thus face a difficult choice.

Older teachers from the school which had served the top of Canton's status ladder claimed that it had once had a pattern very like the first ideally described here. Students came to school with faith in its good will, desired its approval and feared its displeasure as they might a parent's. They did not even think of engaging in any but minor forms of disorderly behavior. Some oldtimers from the school serving the bottom of the status ladder remembered a tightly run disciplinary system in which students moved together through the school's routines and were disciplined for slight missteps which remained rare. Others questioned that the school had operated so successfully even then, maintaining that halls were quiet but classrooms often disorderly.

In any case, by the late sixties with integrated schools, such simple patterns of control were no longer a realistic possibility. Nonetheless, at the former middle status school which had experienced the least discontinuity and had the most moderate and unified faculty, the principal managed to re-

establish a pattern resembling that in which students come to school in innocent acceptance of its routines. With remarkable skill in fabricating social reality through defining ambigous situations, the principal managed to create for faculty and students alike a belief that the routines and the general style of the school must be as he would have them be. Those who disagreed or resisted would simply be butting their heads against necessary social arrangements. He did this despite significant pressures from community, students, and teachers to have the school run otherwise, and the fact that other schools in the district were run otherwise. But still, restive though they might be, the faculty and students of the school believed the character of the school to be essentially immutable, something to accept and cope with whether one liked it or not. Though order was far from total at the school--it was laxer in every respect than at Dale--it was better than at any of the other Canton junior high schools.

The difficulties of school order were vividly illustrated in Canton at the school with the most discontinuous history, the former high status school. The faculty was divided between two factions. The oldtimers from the old school had an approach to teaching much like that of Avon's teachers--though they were in general somewhat more intellectually prepared and enthusiastic than Avon's average teachers. The newly hired teachers had been chosen for their dedication to working with economically deprived and poorly achieving students and for their energetic search for innovative ways of engaging such students to commitment to the school's tasks.

These two groups soon came into bitter ideological and personal conflict. The tension among the faculty and their inconsistent actions provided fertile ground for student disorder. At the same time the younger group had marked success in drawing some of the students from the normally disaffected group into academic interest and dedication to successfully running the school. But their methods involved flexibility and freedom for students which left the school without effective means to cope with the disorder of those not won over. There was far more liveliness, curiosity, and responsibility among the students at this school than the first and far more hostility and aggression.

The pressures on Avon's schools and the priorities of their staffs resulted in patterns which were different in detail from those in Canton. But they also displayed the importance to successful control of procedures which appear inevitable, the limits of coercive power, and the difficulty of increasing both students' positive commitment and control in a situation already fraught with conflictful disorder.

Both Avon schools had new principals and assistant principals in the year of the study. Both faculties agreed that the entrance of a new principal had created a different

atmosphere in the relations of adults and students in the school.

At Dale, the pattern which had prevailed in previous years had resembled the model of a school which succeeds in making its routines seem inevitable to its students. The dominant students assumed that going to school, and to schools structured as Dale was, was a necessary and unavoidable part of life. They might chatter and play if allowed to, even tease and rile their teachers, but they considered the teachers' and the schools' efforts to restrain them perfectly reasonable and legitimate.[18] Further, they were generally aware that the grades and recommendations of the school affected their future. Thus they responded to efforts to restrain them, if these were applied skillfully. And they did not often push their teachers so far as to make them really angry.

It is less clear how the school had managed to control its lower status students as well as it had. Certainly the unity of style of Dale's teachers and the presence of the compliant middle class children helped to give an air of inevitability to its procedures. Also the previous principal, Mr. Adams, who had been in office for ten years, handled problems with personal skill. As one teacher said, "Mr. Adams was. . . relaxed and if there was a problem, there was a way in which he could step in very casually and it disappeared." Another described his style thus: "Mr. Adams. . . talked softly and carried a big stick, but he very seldom raised his voice and always wore a smile. . ." He apparently handled hall discipline problems swiftly, individually, and privately.[19]

He encouraged the teachers to handle their own discipline problems in class and not to send students out to the office. He was reluctant to paddle and suspend, especially to paddle. A male PE teacher who sometimes forgot himself and handled students roughly or used "cuss words" reported that Mr. Adams told him always to come and tell him afterward and to call right away the parents of a child likely to be upset, so that communication was established directly between the adults and anger forestalled. The teacher, though initially reluctant, had found this policy effective.

Mr. Adams established the only open lunch hour in the city, allowing the students to leave campus for lunch. Some teachers commented on the amount of visible social and physical energy discharged during this time, and argued that afternoon classes went more smoothly as a result. There was also an extensive program of extracurricular clubs and intramural and extramural athletics after school. PE teachers were always also teachers of academic subjects, and many regular teachers were coaches; so that students active in the athletic programs had a different context in which to relate to their academic teachers.

The old principal had also supported the efforts of the small group of teachers at Dale who deviated from the usual pedagogical pattern to teach more open-ended classes. At least one ran a special class designed to allow the poorly achieving students to express their own perspectives and interests while the teacher tried to find bridges between these and the purposes of the school.

All the faculty interviewed who had been in the school during Mr. Adams's regime praised his supportiveness, though they picked out different illustrations of it. One spoke of his willingness to discuss a problem behind closed doors. Another remembered his willingness to listen to the pros and cons of various extracurricular plans and give advice. A third spoke of his readiness to take him aside when he was "going off to the side or neglecting my work" and "give me a reminder man to man or professional to professional". These persons also spoke of the old principal's ability to inspire them to volunteer for extra assignments and activities or to take on ones given--even when they already carried others. They said he had the capacity to inspire students with school spirit through assemblies as well as his personal encounters.

Mr. Adams also tried to move the teachers beyond the pattern of simple progress through their curricula. He asked them to try one new thing each year and to report to him at the end on what they had tried and how it had worked. And in the last two years he had taken the opportunity offered by application for junior high accreditation--not required by state or district--to get the teachers to work in committees with one another and with students to state their goals explicitly and examine the means they were using. One observer commented that the older teachers (all the interviewees were under forty) did not like either the extra work or the nature of the task and the interaction, but they did it and were somewhat affected by it.

Under Mr. Adams, then, the school had been run hierarchically with a clear structure and a set of routines established to seem inevitable. But he had added to this pattern attempts to stir commitment from students (school spirit) and to handle infractions in an unobtrusive and respectful way. He tried to encourage teachers to work in the same way, to add inspiration and variety as spice to the straightforward curriculum, to establish relationships with students outside the classroom, and to discipline in a personal and low keyed fashion.

All the adults interviewed who had been in the school the year before saw noticeably changes with Mr. Adams's replacement by Mr. Travis. This was so despite the fact that Mr. Adams was only on leave (though it was not clear by June whether he would return) and Mr. Travis had declared that he would make no major changes while he was acting in an interim capacity.

The changes visible in the students, the adults agreed, were greater tension of a generalized kind and greater overt interracial conflict. They also agreed that teachers' morale was lower, and that they felt less support, some said they felt overtly threatened, in their relationship with the new principal. (The one who commented on the oldest teachers thought some of them were relieved at the cessation of demands for extra efforts in an uncongenial style.)

What actions changed the atmosphere and actions of students and teachers? First, it is important, that though Mr. Travis had been a principal elsewhere for more than ten years, all but one year of his experience was in rural schools. He said in his interview that he found himself unacquainted with the problems which arise with families on welfare, with black students, and with children walking to school over city streets full of interesting distractions rather than arriving by rural bus. He was most "shocked" by the problems of attendance. Attendance at both schools in February-March was 91%.

The new assistant principal had experience exclusively in rural schools and was in his first year out of the classroom. He looked to the principal to define the situation for him.

Mr. Travis had little sympathy with the new difficulties he encountered. He wanted students' activities to be more tightly contained. He made it known he was inclined to end the policy of open lunch hours. Parents and commercial establishments sometimes complained of students' behavior; and he saw no benefits worth the cost of dealing with these complaints. He told the faculty meeting some of the students must be acting "like animals" when they leave the school. He also wanted to move extracurricular activities from after school to an activity period within the school day. He proposed to do away with study halls from which students often got passes to go through the halls to the library or other places. He would reduce the number of periods and lengthen them in compensation. (There were currently seven forty-five minute periods.) When asked in the faculty meeting what was being done about chronically absent students he mentioned that if he had his way school would not be compulsory and the staff would be free to work with only those students who are willing to come of their own accord.

Mr. Travis thus seemed to want to recreate at Dale the kind of tightly run, even regimented, organization he was used to in his previous rural setting. With little knowledge of the character and experiences of poor children (or the tensions that arise between such children of different races) he was unaware that in his efforts to tighten up the conduct of life at Dale, he was screwing shut carefully designed safety valves and snapping needed informal lines of communication between children and adults.

In all his statements and actions, in bulletins, faculty meetings, and his research interview he stressed the establishment of order and quiet among the students and the working out of smooth logistical and clerical routines, and he made little mention of other goals. He told me in the research interview that he could judge a teacher's competence from the hall by the amount of noise and movement in the classroom, as he saw it day after day. A legitimate special project might lead to conversation and movement on one day, but if it persisted the students were not paying attention to the teacher (and thus implicitly to learning). He added that he had to observe in the room to be able to testify about a teacher, but he trusted these observations less since his presence affected the situation.

When asked about policies concerning sending children out of class to the office, he indicated in his interview that he encouraged teachers to send students out to the office for minor disturbances such as refusing to take a seat the teacher asked them to or persisting in talking after being asked to stop. He argued that this allowed the principals to know when a student was being disruptive with more than one teacher as they would not if the teachers handled it themselves. (Here he stood in contrast to disciplinary officers at all the other schools in both Avon and Canton, who maintained strongly that teachers could and should deal with all but extreme misbehavior themselves.)

Mr. Travis wielded his big stick with fanfare and flourish rather than with the quiet teachers described to be Mr. Adams's style. He sometimes used morning announcements to remind students of punishments for misbehavior, for example to tell them that a student can be suspended from school for talking back to a teacher because such behavior is insubordination. He was described by adults as having "a temper" and thus sometimes loudly taking charge of miscreants in the halls before hauling them to his office. The formal dispositions of cases, as both he and the assistant principal described them, indicate a tighter rein than was used at Fillmore or any of the Canton schools. Fighting was almost always cause for suspension at least from class. Ten students had been actually expelled during the year. (At Fillmore with a student body half as large but without Dale's large middle class contingent only two were expelled.)

Mr. Travis made liberal use of words like "insubordination" in dealing with teachers as well as with students. At the faculty meeting I attended he spoke to them collectively in a scolding tone not only about matters in which they had already been lax but about the possibility that they might be so in the future in deciding which students should not be promoted to the next grade. He complained that students were out in the halls with passes from study hall to the library or on other errands. He added, "I rode you people,

and for a while it was better," but now there are students out in the hall all the time. He spoke equally sharply to individuals in the meeting with whom he had disagreements. Several teachers mentioned his critical tone in faculty meeting as one of his salient behaviors, typifying his relationship with teachers.

Teachers spoke with some caution of the differences in the school under the two principals. But, using different examples, those interviewed who had experience under both regimes observed that the students seemed to experience more tensions and that overt interracial conflict and fighting had notably increased. With the new principal's close adherence to formal procedures and his inflexible assignment of duties, they now volunteered for less. Most important for the adults, they felt a lack of the support Mr. Adams had supplied and a presence of unwanted surveillance. One said directly that the faculty was afraid of Mr. Travis. Another observed that the teachers no longer socialized off the job and that they were no longer so friendly as a whole faculty. When asked why this might be, this tenured teacher answered that he had become cautious about his friendly activities lest association with some one the principal perceived as a rebel jeopardize his job.

In summary, though Dale was always a hierarchical school following a clearly set curriculum and encouraging its students to see its routines as immutable, there were significant shifts in its style of control in the year of the study. The new principal turned away from Mr. Adams's strategy of strengthening the control generated by the taken-for-granted through encouraging students and teachers to broaden their ties to the school and one another. Instead Mr. Travis increased regulation of movements and procedures and increased threats and practice of coercion. In the process he unknowingly cut off informal processes that had before supported commitment to the school and to persons within it among both students and faculty. It was too soon to know just what effect these new policies would have in the long run. But in the short run they were increasing rather than decreasing the more serious forms of tension and disorder among students. It is possible that a predominantly coercive approach was not a viable one with this student population.

At Fillmore accounts of the regime of the previous principal were much sketchier than at Dale. There seemed to be fairly general agreement, however, that there had been significant disorder in the classrooms and halls. Even teachers who considered themselves friends of the principal allowed that in his desire not to be prejudiced against the black students he had disciplined them less severely than the white ones, thus inflaming interracial tensions and displeasing both races. Some teachers argued also that he had delegated decisions to committees, then failed to follow through with

reports and actions. Procedures also were sometimes left confused and routine not explained or carried through smoothly.

Every one seemed to agree that the students expressed serious rebellion and hostility in the previous year. Students fought with one another, were absent and tardy, were loud and disorderly in the halls, and were angry and uncooperative with their teachers. Conflict among the students had reached the point where during one week there were interracial fights on the playground during class time that brought police and press to the school.

As Mr. Wolfe took over responsibility for the school the following year, order in the classrooms and corridors was the topic preoccupying all the adults' attention. He started the year with an unusual handicap because it was the first year that adjoining elementary and junior high schools had been administratively split. Each was to have one principal. Consequently, he had to handle alone all the tasks of bookkeeping, reporting, orienting and overseeing staff which are not much lighter in a small school than a large, and still be the sole administrator responsible for discipline in a situation of conflict. At midyear, the district granted the school the services of one of the teachers as assistant principal half time, but then Mr. Wolfe became ill and underwent surgery. He was out of school for over a month and then back only half time for a while himself. The new assistant principal was left with full responsibility in the interim.

In his interview, Mr. Wolfe was frank that this situation had left him with time only to deal with the most immediate problems; so that he had been unable to observe in classrooms and either assess or work with teachers as he would have liked to. He had hopes for doing this in the following year. (He had, however, taken action to dismiss two of the teachers who had the most negative relationships with their classes. Both of these teachers, though experienced, were in their first year at Fillmore.)

In discussing the steps he had taken to ease tensions, Mr. Wolfe put the most emphasis upon his efforts to contact parents and solicit their cooperation before problems reached crisis proportions. He had gone so far as to ask the parents of students of different races leading conflict between groups to meet together with him and their children. This practice had apparently eased the conflict. He also instituted a policy of sending notes home to parents of all children in academic difficulty before they received failing grades, while their work and grade could still be improved.

Mr. Wolfe worked out of intuition and in the concrete reality of each case. In the research interview generalized questions caught him slightly by surprise, and, when asked, he said directly that he tended to respond to situations as

they arose in all their complexity, rather than working out consistent strategies. And indeed much of Mr. Wolfe's strength as a principal lay in his unselfconscious warmth and respectful treatment of both adults and students.

He was firm but not hostile on occasions when I saw him speak to students for discipline. And in the faculty meeting his style was also respectful. On some matters he announced policy and practice and on others he left the decision to the discussion and decision of the faculty (more than Mr. Travis did). His manner was more that of a chairman given responsibility for action than a superior issuing commands.

The teachers' all seemed to like the principal personally. But their estimate of his success and indeed their description of the degree of order in the school and of the state of the students' attitudes varied. Those teachers who were in chronic conflict with their students saw student order as dreadful and the principal as ineffectually afraid to take unpleasant but effective action against troublemakers. Those who controlled their classes and maintained civility at the cost of great frustration had the same feelings in less intense degree. The minority who seemed to feel some success and some rapport with their classes thought that the principal's new policies had made a significant, though not spectacular, improvement in students' attitudes. These teachers looked for steady improvement as the students remembering older regimes were replaced with those who had known only the respectful firmness Mr. Wolfe accorded them.

Clearly, these teachers experienced a different daily reality from other teachers. They therefore had reason to assess both the tone of the school and the policies of those responsible for it as a whole in different ways from other teachers. At the same time, those who were most frustrated in their relations with students may have found relief from self-doubt in blaming their problems in the classroom on the principal's conduct of the school as a whole.

Certainly, the forgoing pages indicate that the school was a long way from being a pleasant place for students and faculty to spend their day. Its atmosphere did not encourage commitment and learning. Though there may have been considerable improvement, there was at the very least much work to be done.

The principal and the majority of teachers disagreed on how best to approach that work. The principal, who believed in hierarchy and in direction from principal to teacher and teacher to student, still wanted to put respectful treatment of students at the top of the list of strategies. He hoped, as he said in his interview, to make students feel happier (and though he did not say it explicitly, more welcome and appreciated). He thought these feelings would increase their voluntary

cooperation and improve their academic performance. He expected to exhaust the possibilities of reasoning and persuasion before turning to coercion. But even such simple human decency as this requires a certain flexibility and leniency which are inimical to a thoroughgoing, effective myth of coercive control. The teachers opted for an emphasis on coercion in the belief that if the most disruptive children were overwhelmed with punishment or expelled, the rest would be awed into willingness to cooperate. And they thought the principal's willingness to talk with students and to give them second and third chances hopelessly undermined the possibility of such a policy.

Several of these teachers said that the problem did not lie just with Mr. Wolfe. Judging from the behavior of prior principals and of superiors in the central office, they argued that organized community groups, officials' fear of stirring racial conflict, and the generally less coercive tone of the surrounding society all combined to make it difficult for a principal to take what they would consider firm coercive action. Though it seemed that Mr. Wolfe acted from personal conviction in very large part, such pressures did undoubtedly exist and have their influence on Fillmore's principals and their superiors downtown.

Certainly individuals who were far more disruptive than any individuals I could identify at Dale were allowed to remain at Fillmore. Fewer children had been expelled from Fillmore than had from Dale, though the general behavior of the students collectively as well as individually was louder and more hostile than that at Dale. But the school could not feasibly have used strong punishments against all the students who were hostile or rebellious. It had therefore to reserve what coercive resources it had for the most serious cases in order to maintain their force.

In such a situation, it is essentially necessary to try to win the students' voluntary cooperation through commitment to the enterprise, or at least a trust that the organization will treat them fairly and justly and deserves a similar response. Such feelings are not easily created out of such conflictful situations as that at Fillmore. And the understandable anger of teachers who deal several hours a day with angry students helps to fire the cycle of hostility, not to quench it.

Mr. Wolfe's kindly and respectful treatment of students and his attempts to reason with them, to gain the cooperation of their parents, and to make them feel more welcome could hardly be called radical or even child-centered. But such an effort to win students' trust does require a hesitance to treat hostility with hostility or rebellion with coercion except as a last resort. Such civility or lenience may appear to angry teachers and to rebellious students as weakness. Teachers become yet more frustrated and students still in

opposition are not deterred from aggressive acts.

The schools of Avon as well as Canton seem to suggest the importance for order of students' belief in the inevitability of school procedures. Further, an awe of vaguely conceived punishments restrains more than the direct imposition of the deterrents available. The story of these schools also suggests that once a significant number of students do start to rebel or behave in a disorderly way on a large scale, all will lose their assumption of the necessity of conformity. Once this happens, it is very difficult to put Humpty-Dumpty together again. Good order can only be restored by establishing trust in the school's good faith and usefulness among students who radically doubt it. But to win this trust adults must be flexible in ways which leave the school with very little defense against those students who remain angry.

## CONCLUSION

The character of a school depends in large part on the nature of its environment--as that term is technically used in the study of organizations. Schools vary with the personnel and the conditions under which they operate. There are so many goals set for public schools and they are so vaguely defined that the persons with the most access to a given situation are able to determine their definition and relative priority. Further, the means for reaching any given goal are neither well understood nor standardized. They depend upon the preferences, intuitions, and working style of the persons responsible in each situation.

Perhaps the most important single influence on a school is its students. Education involves some kind of a transformation in those students which requires at the very least their passive acceptance. Even instrumental goals such as order depend upon their behavior, though not necessarily upon their desires. In any technical task a craftsman must adjust to his material, or imperil the quality of his product. School staffs by no means always find successful strategies for working with their material, but even when they do not, the character of that material shapes the school's life.

Because the teachers perform the central work of the organization (actually in cooperation with students) and because they form the vast majority of persons given a formal right to define the situation, they are the next most important group in determining the character of a school. The principal carries responsibility for the life of the school as a whole, but he can only affect it within the limits allowed by the students and faculty and the policies made above him in the district office. His actions, while important, are much less determinative than his accountability suggests. Finally, the standards and expectations of the community will shape formal policies

announced, followed, and resisted. Among the most important policies for the life of each school will be those determining the social and racial character of the student population, and those affecting the kind of person assigned to the faculty.

I chose to study the schools of Avon as schools which would be fairly typical of American public schools, as the schools of Canton were not. What I found in Avon did not change my belief that the schools were representative of many across the country. Dale is probably a more common kind of school than any of the others I observed. The middle and working class white children who set its tone are probably very ordinary. They accept the ways of the school and master its curriculum acceptably without becoming very engaged with it. The teachers are similar people grown up. They also accept the ways of the conventional school, including its curriculum, and have little urge to question it or adventure beyond its well-defined borders.

Fillmore probably also is typical of many schools that deal with an economically marginal clientele, especially when that clientele is ethnically marginal as well. Such students find school a frustrating experience without the rewards experienced by the students of the mainstream. Their teachers find the students' responses frustrating. A cycle of mutual recrimination is easily started. Anger leads to aggressive behavior. Soon the staff must risk an appearance of weakness and an actual vulnerability to angry students if they try to reach students through pedagogical flexibility and humane respect. But to protect themselves and the majority of students from attack requires a regimentation of students' lives which would be hopelessly alienating--and probably not possible in many communities.

I have described Dale and Fillmore in considerable detail to give the reader a subjective sense of the complex ways in which students' behavior, teachers' skills and character, and the principal's policies blend into a total school atmosphere which in turn shapes students', teachers', and administrators' behavior. The elements which go to make up the distinctive character of each school are many and their possible combinations are legion. The totality of every school will be unique in some degree and it will change from year to year as some of its elements change.

At the same time, schools are formal organizations in which persons are expected to act in rather narrowly defined ways for the purpose of accomplishing specifiable common ends. Even though much of their activity does not follow expectations or contribute to official goals, it is still shaped by them. It has also been my purpose to go beyond a description of the two schools to an explanation of their nature in terms of the pressures of organizational needs.

As the reader leaves Dale and Fillmore behind, I have not

given him a set of types of schools which he may fit to others in his experience. Rather I hope he will have slightly more capacity to see beyond the fascinating complexity of the idiosyncratic in every school so that he seeks an understanding of the social forces whose variation and interaction go very far to shape it. Such an understanding should be helpful, though not sufficient, in knowing what can be changed and how to change it.

FOOTNOTES

[1]The district reading consultant's emphasis on search for material of interest to the students was an exception here. But the teachers of reading classes were not specially selected or trained. At least two found the method wholly uncongenial.

[2]Avon's teachers share characteristics common to teachers in general as they are described in a recent book by Lortie. He analyzes the character of teaching as an occupation, shaped by the nature of the career line and by the work setting. He finds that teachers typically exhibit both an acceptance of a given, traditional curriculum and an individualistic development of their style for imparting it and for dealing with children. Dan C. Lortie, Schoolteacher: A Sociological Study (University of Chicago Press, 1975).

[3]Elizabeth Eddy discusses similar conflicts as typical of the encounter of rural families and city schools across several ethnic backgrounds. See her Walk the White Line (Anchor Books, 1967).

[4]The criteria by which students would decide the validity of a teacher's claims varied somewhat with the kind of student in the diverse groups contained in Canton's schools. Furthermore, the criteria used by every group of children were often subtle. This was especially the case among children in the lower tracks who were the most alert for the insulting implication that they could not learn in any case.

[5]This usage has only a distant relationship to Weber's use of the term to refer to the personal power of prophets of a whole new moral order.

[6]Generally influence is used as an aspect of control along with other forms of power. When it is used alone, as persuasion, control has no institutional basis and becomes a matter of the dominance of one personality over another--whether through logic, seductiveness, or energy. Such control is unstable and uses tremendous personal resources. Ann Swidler describes in detail the exercise of control--and the failure to exercise it--in two free schools which formally eschewed institutional forms of power. The course of events without the use of the usual forms of control tells much about them and about the character of more traditional schools as well. See Ann Swidler, "Organization without Authority: A Study of Two Alternative Schools" (unpublished Doctoral dissertation, Department of Sociology, University of California at Berkeley, 1975).

[7]Blau and Scott discuss the use of mechanized processes as a form of control and the degree to which they can substitute for other forms of control used in organizations. See

Peter Blau and Richard Scott, Formal Organizations (Chandler Publishing Co., 1962), 176-183.

[8]Robert Dreeben points out that one of the tasks of the elementary teachers is to make grades symbols of important emotional value for children. They are first indicators of the teacher's regard, and then more intrinsically signs of the child's worth compared to his agemates. See Robert Dreeben, On What is Learned in School (Addison Wesley, 1968), 35-37.

[9]Etzioni distinguishes moral, utilitarian, and coercive forms of control. See Amitai Etzioni, A Comparative Analysis of Complex Organizations (Free Press, 1961). This distinction can be a useful one in analyzing schools. The foregoing suggests that moral control is most important with students intrinsically interested in the acquisition of knowledge (or a cultural style). Utilitarian control--using grades and the promise of selection to attractive activities and elective classes as well as to educational and career opportunities beyond school--may be most important for the aspiring middle and working class. With children who feel no interest in the school's offerings and expect to gain no advantage through compliance, the school will most easily fall back on coercive control. (Though as I will discuss at length below, this form of control is fraught with problems.)

[10]Stinchcombe documents higher rates of "rebellious" behavior among students who did not expect conformity in school to be of any use to them in the adult world. These students were poor achievers from white collar backgrounds as well as students expecting to continue in the low status of their parents. See Arthur Stinchcombe, Rebellion in a High School (Quadrangle Books, 1964).

[11]For two very different participants' descriptions of such practices in Boston and Brooklyn, see Jonathan Kozol, Death at an Early Age (Bantam Books, 1968) and Bob Moore, Welcome to #57: Four Years of Teaching and Learning in Bedford-Stuyvesant (G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1974).

[12]It is perhaps a mark of the degree to which Avon Teachers accept the circumstances in which they work, and do not seek to alter them or to invent alternative ways of dealing with them, that the only spontaneous reference I heard made to plans to build a new building for Fillmore over the summer was that by a shop teacher who complained that the present equipment which he considered inadequate was to be reinstalled in the new building. Even though it was the close of school, I came across no discussion of ways to encourage student enthusiasm or facilitate adjustment as they entered a new school plant. And in talking about the future of the school, none of the teachers or administrators referred to the impact of moving to a new school. (The school was to be on the same

lot in a different position. The current school would be demolished and replaced with playing fields.) Plans for the new school were traditional in large part.

[13]I never saw a fight at either school, though one took place in the hall while I was in another part of the building at Fillmore.

[14]One intriguing indicator of teachers' different feelings about themselves at the two schools was their dress. At Dale teachers dressed in clothes one might expect in any reasonably formal office. But at Fillmore, many teachers' dress was casual to the point of being dowdy. There were, however, a handful of teachers--among those trying hardest to keep up morale--who dressed not only formally but with a certain flare.

[15]Bidwell discusses in detail the ways that the involuntary and unselected clientele of the school makes the relationship of teachers and students differ from the model of client and professional which it in some ways resembles. He especially emphasizes the difficulty of establishing the trust which is the expected basis of client conformity to professional directives--and indeed of most compliance with authority in situations where subordinates care about the ends being sought. See Charles E. Bidwell, "Students and Schools: Some Observations on Client Trust in Client Serving Organizations," in William R. Rosengren and Mark Lefton, eds. Organizations and Clients (Charles E. Merrill, 1970), 37-69.

[16]Gracey described in detail the pressures from the need for order and from students' and parents' concern with grades and competitive accomplishment which discouraged teachers in a suburban elementary school who tried to engage students' independent curiosity. See Harry L. Gracey, Curriculum or Craftsmanship: Elementary School Teachers in a Bureaucratic System (University of Chicago Press, 1972).

[17]Spady argues on this basis that the school's goal of instruction is inherently in tension with its need to control large numbers of energetic young people through routinized procedures. See William G. Spady, "Authority and Empathy in the Classroom," in D. W. O'Shea, ed. Sociology of the School and Schooling: Proceedings of the Second Annual Conference of the Sociology of Education Association (Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Education, 1974), 87-125.

[18]When students' social class is higher than teachers' and their parents as well or better educated, they may feel they have grounds for superior judgment to teachers. This was a common occurrence in Canton with its highly educated professional families. The vice-principal at Dale said that those few children from high status Pleasant Glade who did rebel at school procedures were self-righteously persistent, and often supported by their parents. Becker found in the early fifties

that Chicago public school teachers preferred to teach in lower middle class neighborhoods over not only poor ones but upper middle class ones as well. They found the children "spoiled" in the higher status neighborhoods. See Howard Becker, "Social Class Variations in the Teacher-Pupil Relationship, "Journal of Educational Sociology, 25 (April 1952), 451-465. Bidwell's general proposition that clients' sophistication is inversely related to their trust in professionals is consistent with these observations. See Bidwell, op. cit.

[19]Spady argues that the isolation of students who challenge the school's accustomed procedures is essential to the prevention of collective unrest. See William G. Spady, "The Authority System of the School and Student Unrest: A Theoretical Exploration," in C. W. Gordon, ed. 1974 Yearbook on Education (National Society for the Study of Education, 1974), 36-77.

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